聖剣使いの禁呪詠唱

2

聖剣使いの禁呪詠唱（ワールドブレイク）

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GA文庫

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Seiken Tsukai No World Break vol.2

by Awamura Akamitsu

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Illustrations

「カノジョさんが二人いるってどんな感じなのです？」
可愛い天使の素朴なギモン!?

「殺るッ！」
絶対零度圏の禁呪発動!!
憤怒とともに、脳髄の奥から
力と記憶が溢れ出てくる
今、禁忌の箱が開かれる――

Prologue

There exists a Demonic Sword that can only be made manifest by the ‘Man-eater’.
There exists an instantaneous transportation technique that can only be used by the ‘Witch of Gates’.
Each equally characteristic wildcards.
As a general name, the White Knight Order calls them thus —
The utterly unique, Origins.

Haimura Moroha saw a dream of a past life.
Outside the window, a blizzard raged.
The sky hadn’t been clear in this area for a year.
It was as though it had been plunged into a perpetual, freezing hell.
In these barren wastes, stood Moroha’s castle.
The cold sank deeply into the stone rooms. In this atmosphere, even the fire in the hearth was frail, and the crackling of the firewood seemed lonely. It seemed as if even the carpet had frozen and it was no different from a stone floor. The cold was like needles, continually piercing the skin.
That torture chamber like room was Moroha’s office.
With no hope of birdsong, he listened to the empty howling of the blizzard.
The breath he exhaled was a pure white. Sat in an office chair, chilled like a casket, Moroha was reading ancient documents.
In today’s dream, alone he was not.
“I’m cold.”
From his legs, a woman’s voice sounded.
It was sweet like honey, and tickled the ears like a feather, it was an alluring voice.
It was that of a woman with long black hair, sprawled coquettishly into his lap.
She was just in the blind spot created by the documents, and her expression wasn’t visible.
However, he felt her chill and shivering through his thighs.
“Let’s move your castle to a warmer place? Hmm, Shuu Saura.”
The black haired woman called Moroha in the dream this.
Shuu Saura. That was Moroha’s name in a past life.
In one of two.
“This used to be a grain producing region.”
Feigning absentmindedness, Shuu Saura continued the conversation with the woman.
“Yes, that’s right. Until ten years ago that is,” with her head still in his lap, she used cynicism as a child would to draw attention, “before you used the forbidden spell.”
Whatever she said, Shuu Saura didn’t raise his face from the book.
The woman piled on more words to try and draw attention.

“With just a single spell, you turned this country into an icy hell and took tens of thousands of lives. But you saved more people. I am one of them. I can remember it like it was just yesterday you know? Though it’s just a decade ago?”
Calling a decade ‘just’ was also seasoned with sarcasm, but her tone remembering that seemed somewhat happy.
“Hmm, Shuu Saura, my lord, my beloved, just when will you tire of living your life in this icy prison and tormenting my body with this cold?”
As she carried on speaking, she was also continuously stroking his lap.
Lovingly, teasingly.
“It’s not a case of growing tired. Is this not a suitable castle for I, the worlds enemy, the destroyer of order and the one loathed as the Pluto? Is not here eminently suitable?”
“So you’ll continue repenting here until you die? You really like that, don’t you?”
“I don’t know what you mean, I simply have a liking for this area.”
Shuu Saura feigned indifference.
Simultaneously, a sniff from him signified that the conversation was at an end.
He went to turn to a new page — but suddenly, the woman grabbed the documents.
“In front of me, your wife, I’d like you to not behave like the bad person, you know?”
She said, with an awfully peevish tone.
“If you call yourself my spouse, then I’d want it to be as a wise wife, right, oh Witch of the Underworld?”
With a wry smile, Shuu Saura chided her childish behaviour.
There was now nothing obstructing the space between them, and the woman called the Witch of the Underworld’s face was now exposed.
She had a cold, inhuman beauty that made it possible to mistake her for a doll if she didn’t move.
Her expression was rigid like a mask.
Her voice and tone were clearly peeved but her face showed absolutely none of that emotion.
“Return it.”
His words short, Shuu Saura ordered, extending his hand.
The woman was silent and expressionless, but as if in a fit of anger, threw it behind her.
To the man feared as the Pluto, she was behaving unreservedly like a spoiled child. Sulking.
An innocence as if being feared as a witch was a lie.
Shuu Saura let out an aghast sigh and then his wry smile was filled with deep affection.
“Do not trouble me so much.”
“I refuse, I want you to care for me more.”

But the witch grew more and more peevish, and more and more reckless.
“Look.”
She stood and advanced on him.
She suddenly opened her top and exposed two abundant breasts.
Exposed and marked on her breast was a brutal brand.
Harming her artificially perfect beauty, a cruel blot.
However, the woman was proud, throwing out her chest to show it.
“You were the one that freed me from slavery, weren’t you?”
Her honey-like voice coaxingly whispered.
“Don’t you have a duty of tying me down?”
Then she took his right hand and guided it to the mark upon her breast, the proof that she was once a slave.
“…Honestly.”
As he looked at her like a beloved child, he reacted to her words.
“You are free. In this world, there exists no chain that can bind a person to another.”
He softly stroked the brand on her breast.
The fingertip touching the witch’s breast was gentle and loving.
“I’m drowning in the freedom you gave me, so I can only cling to you.”
The Witch of the Underworld encircled his neck with her arms and straddled his lap.
“Please. Look at me. Hold me. Don’t let me go. Hold me tight. Until we die. And then once we are reborn. Forever. Always.”
The witch leant her slender body into him, compressing her abundant breasts between them.
“That is your atonement to me.”
Her face was motionless, seeming artificial.
However, her gazing eyes alone, they were filled with tears.
In place of an answer, Shuu Saura strongly embraced her.
Without touching even a finger more together, without even a kiss.
Sharing a slight warmth in this frozen world.
It was as if —
They were confirming the connection of their souls, it was a deep, passionate embrace.
There, Shuu Saura’s dream was interrupted, and Moroha awoke.
“It was a bit of a waste.”
The piercing cold of the room, the warmth of the woman in his arms, it was all a dream.
The real Haimura Moroha was here.
In the courtyard of Akane Private Academy High-school.
An academy of those who inherited their past life’s memories and superhuman abilities, Reincarnators, or Saviours.
He’d fallen asleep sprawled on the lawn, basking in the sun.
“So that was the Witch of the Underworld… We finally met.”

With his eyes still closed, Moroha thought over the dream, gathering up the feelings that were racing away from his arms, the remnants of his dream.
The irreplaceable feeling, of the heat of the woman’s skin.
The incomparable softness of the abundant chest.
He didn’t want to lose them and gripped onto them.
“That’s right… they were about this big.”
Set in his right hand, he enjoyed a certain softness.

“Ahh♥”
Suddenly, he heard an ardent, agonised sigh.
From directly in front of him too.
“— What?”
Moroha’s eyes flew open.
His dozing and the final fragments of his slumber blew away.
“Morning, Moroha.”
A beautiful girl’s face vividly filled his vision.
“What are you doing, Shizuno?”
Surprised, he reflexively tried to stir, but couldn’t.
The girl, Urushibara Shizuno, had tightly snuggled up to him and was leaning against his chest.
He was having a nice sleep, and suddenly this happened.
He always had to be on his guard.
Shizuno answered nonchalantly.
“‘What?’ I’m getting my breasts felt up.”
“I’m sorry!”
He frantically removed the hand he had grabbed onto Shizuno’s generous breasts with whilst half asleep.
“I can’t let my guard down around you, can I?”
“I was half asleep. I wholeheartedly apologise.”
“I forgive you. In fact, you can touch them more you know?”
Shizuno took his right hand and tried to guide it towards her chest.
“So? That aside, what are you doing here?”
Moroha gently took his hand back and moved the topic onto something else.
Reproaching him for being cold, Shizuno languidly answered as she placed her head on his chest.
“Isn’t it obvious I’m basking in the sun?”
With Shizuno’s full, abundant chest glued to him like this, he was excessively aware of them. They were pressed around his stomach, flattened and giving a pleasant shaking feeling.
He’d just felt them and it brought the indescribable sensation in the palm of his hand back to mind.
“Th-then wouldn’t here be fine?”
Moroha frantically patted the space next to him.
And above all tried to persuade her that they didn’t need to embrace like this to bask in the sun.
This situation wasn’t good.
It really wasn’t good.
“Aren’t I always telling you not to do things that will lower your value as a girl?”
“But, no one can see, you know?”
Indeed, they were alone in the courtyard.
“We’re in plain view from the corridor so…”
Moroha retorted with his eyes half closed.

The majority of students should be in lessons, but there might be some exceptions.
“If I’m with you, I don’t mind falling, you know?”
As if confirming the sensation of his chest, Shizuno slowly rubbed her cheek on him and answered shamelessly.
“Stop it with the jokes.”
To get rid of the seductive mood, Moroha scolded her as if baring fangs.
Shizuno didn’t answer.
However, small dimples appeared at the edge of her mouth.
She had a habit of showing them when she was teasing people and hurling jokes.
“Is it really that fun to tease me…?”
“Yes, it is. So I want to be with you every day, and tease you.”
Moroha was lost for words and astonished.
“…Honestly, if you heard that, it’d obviously be a confession.”
However, she was probably just saying she wanted Moroha as a plaything every day.
What a waste.
“Are you happy, Moroha?”
“Being teased every day is a real nuisance.”
Moroha threw up his hands in surrender as he proclaimed.
Once more, tiny, small dimples appeared on her face.
Since meeting her at the entrance ceremony, it had only been two months.
The length of time might be short, but they’d made deep bonds.
Thus, when there was chance like this, Shizuno would snuggle in close.
So Moroha knew.
Just from seeing these small dimples, that Shizuno was enjoying herself.
But normally, you wouldn’t understand.
Outside of Moroha, no-one would find those dimples.
Shizuno was a girl that lacked that much in expression.
“And she’s so beautiful, it’s a waste.”
Who knew how many times he’d been wrapped in these impressions.
But there was no changing it, Shizuno was that kind of girl.
And then, that reality brought a memory back to Moroha once again.
“Hey, Shizuno,” it had once more brought his question back to mind, “are you really the Witch of the Underworld?”
Who knew how many times he had asked that question.
When a characteristic that made him think of nothing but that appeared, he would ask.
And now, something had come back to mind.
In the dream he’d just witnessed, the witch, lacking in expression.
That witch was beautiful, but she had a mask like face.
Locking eyes with Shizuno at point blank range, they seemed to overlap.
“I… can’t think it’s a coincidence.”

Within this academy, Moroha had exceptionally few memories of his previous lives.
Or more strictly speaking, they were horrendously biased. He only had memories in the middle of battle, he had essentially no memories of what they normally did, or what kind of families they had.
For example, he had a vague knowledge of the existence of the Pluto, Shuu Saura's right hand woman, known as the Witch of the Underworld or the King's Assistant Witch, but couldn't even remember her face.
And then today, finally, he met her in a dream. And then, embracing Shizuno like this brought that back to mind, was it a stretch?
Moroha was silent and awaited her words.
"Well…"
With her jaw still resting on his chest, she tilted her head.
"I don't know what you're talking about."
With her unreadable, mask like face.
Once again.
However many times he asked, she replied the same way.
Saying that it was a misunderstanding.
Moroha strained his eyes further.
To not overlook even the slightest change in her facial expression.
And then, whatever she was thinking, suddenly,
"Do it."
She closed her eyes and extended her head forwards, approaching Moroha's face with her lips.
"What are you thinking about!?"
Moroha placed her head firmly between his two hands.
"I was sure you were going to kiss me."
Shizuno brazenly answered, once more with small dimples.
"Where did you get that idea from?"
"Was I mistaken? Ah, your feelings are hard to read after all."
"Your feelings are the ones hard to read."
Astounded, Moroha released her head.
"Then, I'll tell you what I'm feeling now."
Suddenly, Shizuno's lips resumed their advance to Moroha's.
"I told you, stop playing around."
To avoid them, Moroha turned his face to the side.
And was startled.
The moment he turned his head, his vision was filled —
"I'd wondered where you had gone, so you were being perverted behind your sister's back? Yeah? Hmm? Oh."
With the form of his imposing 'sister' with a vein pulsing on her temple.
She was standing a little distance away, glaring with a scary face.
She was a beautiful girl (when she wasn't angry).

Her eyes were full of vigour (so her anger was scary), vitality flowed from her petite body (so her anger packed a punch), and her bright coloured hair was pulled up in a side-tail which she was irritably playing with.
Her name was Ranjou Satsuki.
In the previous life when Moroha was Flaga, Satsuki's previous incarnation was his blood related sibling. So even now she called him her brother.
"Where did you hear from?"
In a cold sweat, Moroha timidly asked.
"From 'you were going to kiss me', you pervert."
Satsuki's mouth was drawn into a line.
"Then listen to 'Where did you get that idea from?' as well!"
"Excuses are useless! You kiss freak, Nii-sama, womaniser!"
And above that, her eyes were narrowed.
"The kiss freak is Shizuno! How many times do you think I've been made her victim?"
"Ohhh, I only knew about the once. Why don't you tell me all about the others in the interrogation room, mister victim…?"
Moroha suddenly looked away from her.
Thanks to that, he returned to facing forwards.
"Welcome back."
As if she'd been lying in wait, Shizuno planted her lips there.
"Gyah! Get away from Nii-sama, Urushibara!"
Satsuki bristled like a cat with its fur on end.
"Anyway! What are you two sneaking out here for!?"
And who was the one that accused them of being perverted just a moment ago?
"Hmm? Basking in the sun."
Whilst Moroha was thinking that, Shizuno went ahead and answered.
Quicker than Moroha could correct that he wasn't.
"Then you can do that here!"
Satsuki stomped her feet there.
"Why do you need to cling to him like that!?"
"Hold on a minute, you probably don't know, but the topic's already looping, Satsuki."
"Just how far ahead are you getting!?"
Satsuki really was liable to do anything, Moroha's face clouded.
"It's like that, so don't get in the way, *little sister.*"
As Shizuno added fuel to the fire, Moroha's face grew cloudier.
"I-I-I-I-I'll sleep wit— I mean bask in the sun with you! That shouldn't be in the way, right!?"
With steam coming from her head, she drew in close.
Still lying down, Moroha was sandwiched by Satsuki and Shizuno.
"See, go over there, Urushibara!"
Pushing at Shizuno, Satsuki took his chest and placed her head heavily down.

“That would be getting in the way, Ranjou-san.”
Shizuno pushed Satsuki and reclaimed his chest.
“I’m Moroha’s little sister you know!? So I’ve got the right of precedence!”
Satsuki pushed her off again and drew a boundary that Moroha couldn’t see.
Of course, one giving herself plenty of space.
“Considering you came afterwards, don’t you think that’s shameless?”
Shizuno redrew the boundary on Moroha’s chest.
Of course, one that gave her nearly the entire area.
“It’s got nothing to do with order!”
“Then it has nothing to do with family connections either, does it?”
Satsuki and Shizuno seemed to compete, each redrawing the other’s boundaries.
A war for territory on Moroha’s chest.
Each making a claim, each unwilling to back down.
“If you go even slightly past there, it’s war!”
“Oh, I accept. I’ll turn your territory into scorched earth.”
“You pair, don’t turn my chest into scorched earth.”
Moroha complained at them using a person’s body as a toy.
“Split it evenly, evenly! That’s fair then.”
“…Tch.”
“If it’s Moroha’s arbitration, there’s no choice but to listen.”
Satsuki and Shizuno both lay down arms and cordially shared Moroha’s chest.
“Just what am I doing…?”
Looking at both beautiful girls on either side, Moroha realised he hadn’t solved the problem at all.
“Honestly, do they get on well, or badly…?”
Each lay their head on half of his chest like twins, watching them happily bask in the sun, Moroha grumbled to himself.
Certainly from looking at them, they were on tenterhooks but, at the same time, Moroha himself was unusually satisfied, and drowsiness approached again.
Just then—
“Alert, moving from Phase 1 to Phase 2 — The White Knight Agency, Japanese Branch has formally requested dispatch of the Strikers. All members and reserves, please gather in the schoolyard.”
An announcer’s voice sounded from the various speakers around the courtyard.
Moroha’s drowsiness vanished and his eyes sharpened.
“Let’s go.”
Shizuno smoothly stood.
“Gu gu gu, just when we were getting to the good bit…”
Whilst she regretfully and spitefully spoke, she gathered her willpower and stood.

“Do your best, Nii-sama. I’ll be cheering you on so do the most.”
Then she stretched a hand out to Moroha.
“Of course, I need to earn my wages.”
Moroha answered without enthusiasm and grabbed her hand and stood.
That’s right, Shizuno had dressed it up in jokes, but Moroha wasn’t basking in the sun.
He was preparing for the battle that was about to start, resting his body and awaiting orders.
He brushed off the dust on his combat uniform.
The dust danced, and blew away in the wind, just like the sweet content feeling from earlier.
Accompanied by the two girls, he resolutely strode to the schoolyard.

In the courtyard, there were already twelve students clad in combat uniform.
“We’re all here then.”
Standing right in the centre was a tall, lean man who saw Moroha and nodded.
He was a third year with a hard face but an honest countenance.
His name was Isurugi Jin.
Akane Academy had a group called the Strikers.
An elite unit that Moroha was part of.
A group of Saviours that were given the qualifications and honour to go out into live combat.
The best were chosen from amongst the entire school, a mere thirteen elites.
Those monsters’ king, the leader of the Strikers, was Isurugi.
“Then, I’ll open the gate.”
Solemnly proclaimed the beautiful woman waiting next to him.
She wore a business woman like suit, and a witch-like pointy hat that somehow went together.
She wasn’t a student. The principal of the academy was this person.
Including Moroha, the Strikers all corrected their posture and assented.
Sweeping away her luxurious blonde hair so it wouldn’t get in the way, her blue eyes congealed in seriousness.
“Trace.”
Her slender finger traced lines of light into the empty air, spinning ancient magical characters.
I long for my home. I long for nostalgia.
Oh my hometown, across the distance, thousands of miles distant, tens and tens of thousands of miles away.
Oh land of the past, out of my reach,

I am deluded, I am hateful,
Take these feelings and curtail the distance between us,
Take this curse and warp the world between us.
Her glamourous red lips vividly chanted the spell, as if singing.
The principal's mana rose and the atmosphere screamed as a noisy wind blew.
Then, further swallowing the forces of nature, the surroundings suddenly darkened.
As if the area had suddenly entered dusk.
Plink.
In the courtyard, a point of pallid blue light appeared.
The light gradually strengthened, spreading out in a circle.
Slowly, slowly, like a blot eating away at the world, it drew a geometric design, until it finally constructed a pallid blue magic circle.
With that, the principal let out a sigh of satisfaction.
It was without a doubt a witch's technique.
A fantastic spectacle.
However, it was an everyday thing at Akane Academy and no-one was surprised.
Then, at the leader, Isurugi's command, the students chorused.
"We are the 'Saviours'!"
"We are the 'Strike' for our people, our peace and our justice!"
Isurugi nodded firmly and took a step forward.
Into the pallid blue magic circle.
As if he had stepped into a fountain, his body sunk within the light.
With the reservists supporting and watching them go, one by one the members continued after.
"You'd better be first."
Satsuki encouraged Moroha once more.
"You'll bring me a souvenir, right?"
Shizuno relaxed things with a joke.
Moroha thanked them both with his eyes, and finally leapt into the circle.
It was as if he'd just strolled to a nearby place.
In a natural stance, without getting worked up, without removing his daring smile.
A discomfort pressed in on him, as if the heavens and earth had suddenly been reversed, but he was already used to it.
In a little under a second, Moroha stepped out from the circle.
The scenery had completely changed.
Where the magic circle let out was an area thickly overgrown with trees.
Wherever you looked there was an infinite series of twisted tree trunks, the spread branches and leaves formed a natural roof and the ground was so overgrown with grass and moss that there was barely a place to stand.
The sun's light was distant, almost as if the scenery were haunted.

There wasn’t the slightest whiff of man-made things like asphalt or concrete.
Only the thick scent of the greenery filled Moroha’s nose, tightening his awareness.
From the preliminary reports, this was deep within the Hida Mountain range.
The area was separated from Akane academy by several hundred kilometres and they had instantaneously moved there.
Through the Erratic Portal the principal had made.
“All members, prepare for combat. The report says the target is approximately five kilometres ahead.”
With a grim stare, Isurugi glared northwards.
“We’re playing this by the book. Momochi. Haimura.”
“Sir!”
At Isurugi’s call, an energetic, short haired second year girl cheerfully came forwards.
Moroha followed at her right.
“Both of you will advance and perform reconnaissance. Even if it’s just one thing, dig up as much information on the target as you can.”
At his order, Moroha and Momochi shot off like arrows.
Moroha’s entire body was enveloped in a radiant white light, and Momochi’s in a radiant blue.
It was the light of the power that communicated with the divine — namely, Prana.
The two of them gained explosive leg strength and sprinted into the mountains with God Speed Link.
They rushed through the trees like a gale, leaping from branch to branch like animals, dashing along a trackless path.
If you were to look from above, you would probably be able to discern two lines of light, blue and white being drawn abnormally quickly.
Sometimes zig-zagging between tree trunks, sometimes mixing as if in a dance of splendour, they rushed north.
“How shall we attack today, Moroha?”
The short haired upperclassman, Momochi spoke as if gossiping, whilst running parallel.
“Isn’t the same as normal fine?”
Moroha replied half-heartedly, whilst continuing to sprint at full speed.
However, they weren’t foolish enough to look to the side or to bite their tongues.
“Hey hey, how about we get it on our own?”
“It won’t end well if we get carried away?”
“It’s a joke! You’re too damned serious.”
“That’s because I’d like to collect my wages.”
They cracked jokes as they travelled on foot through the trees, at superhuman speeds.

She and Moroha competed for first and second users of God Speed Link in Akane Academy.
To them, even this trail that animals would find difficult, it was like walking across a garden.
“I’m counting on you for support, partner!”
“Sure thing.”
After getting close one last time and high-fiving, the two split to the left and right as if repelled apart.
In front of them, already visible —
Was a roughly dozen metre tall black panther like monster.
It was unreasonably tall for a creature in the feline family.
And moreover, its eyes glittered gold.
They weren’t reflecting the sun, they themselves were letting off light, flickering like flames.
That alone, whilst it was crouched in a clearing, stood out.
At that very moment it was eating, it had brought down a bear and was indulging in its meat.
From its oral cavity, a rubber hose like tongue, or some other grotesque organ, extended, deeply thrust into the bear’s throat and was sucking from inside as if it were a vacuum cleaner.
It was a frightful form of predation.
Therefore, just from a glance, anyone could tell.
This discomfiting creature shouldn’t be on this blue planet.
It shouldn’t exist.
It couldn’t exist.
Namely, a Metaphysical.
A natural enemy of all living things that could only be defeated by Saviours.
The monster noticed their approach.
It retracted its rubber hose like tongue into its mouth and raised its head.
Its two, disembodied soul like eyes were fixated on Moroha.
There was still more than a hundred metres between them.
Regardless, a ferocious thirst for blood, so much so that it reeked of the stench of blood, reached him, making his skin crawl.
Letting the grotesque flood of bloodlust wash over him, Moroha—
“Come, Saratiga…!”
Smiled daringly and raised his right hand.
His ID tag was already within his grip.
Pouring prana into it, it instantly changed shape.
It extended like red hot metal, and Saratiga was manifest in his right hand.
“…First one attack. Let’s see its toughness.”
Moroha pushed a huge amount of prana into the longsword.
The blade gathered a white light, as if shining in the sun above them.
Whether the fighting intent had reached it, the Metaphysical prepared for battle.

Suddenly, the black hair all over its body stood on end, sharp like a hedgehog.
Solely because of its sheer size, each of those needle was like a javelin, holding a brutality.
The Metaphysical roared like an animal.
Simultaneously, it fired all of its needles at Moroha.
It was like a rain of arrows fired by an entire battalion, they came flying in, filling the sky.
“Moroha!?”
Momochi shrieked from where she had separated too.
However, Moroha didn’t falter.
He raised his sword overhead, and with a downward slash, released the prana he had thickened inside.
A violent blade of wind welled forth, enough to mow down the trees before him.
A white wind of destruction, with plenty of Moroha’s prana riding along with it.
It raged like a tornado, swallowing the oncoming needles, smashing them and all together pulverising them.
Ancestral Arts, Jupiter.
A high class light technique that not many could use, even at Akane Academy.
After blowing away the needles, the aftershocks struck the Metaphysical.
Even its huge body faltered.
“Taaaaaaa!”
Not letting that opportunity go to waste, Momochi suddenly got in close and sliced with her short sword.
Consecutive, high speed attacks that would allow her to be mistaken for splitting into four.
One flash, two, three, four, with each fluttering of her sword, the sound of it being deflected rang out.
“This one’s pretty tough, Moroha!”
With it having fur that could change to needles, it was within reason, Moroha nodded lightly.
After being sliced at by Momochi, the Metaphysical noisily stirred, and its fur all stood on end once again.
In a panic, Momochi leapt back, but the grotesque monster fired half of its needles after her.
“Didn’t I say I was counting on you!”
Being pursued by several hundred needles, Momochi let out a high pitched scream.
“And I said sure thing.”
In the meantime, Moroha had rushed to her side.
With his empty left hand, he wrote a single phrase in the empty air.

“Fire discriminates not against good nor evil as it burns and purifies with ferocious mercy.”
The characters of light became fire, burning away the hundreds of needles assailing her.
Not one needle was allowed to pass.
It was one of the Ancestral Arts, dark art, Flare.
By the classification of the White Knight Order, there were two types of Saviours.
Those that used superhuman martial arts, light techniques, White Steels.
And those that used magic like dark arts, Black Mages.
Save one exception, there were no other types of Saviours.
Haimura Moroha was that exception.
The only one in recorded history to have two past lives, an Ancient Dragon.
Therefore, he could use both light techniques, and dark arts.
Enraged at its attack being interfered with, the Metaphysical fired the remaining needles, this time at Moroha.
However, using the embers of his previous Flare, he burnt those away as well.
Several hundred needles vanished instantly.
“Could it be weak to fire!?”
Being barely saved, Momochi yelled in delight.
“It might be tough like metal, but fur is still fur.”
Moroha in the end, quietly began an experiment like a scientist, to confirm it.
“Trace.”
His left hand once again drew ancient magic characters in the empty air.
This time it wasn’t one line, it was three.
“Over here, you!”
To buy time, Momochi made a pass at it with her sword.
The mostly unintelligent monster turned its angry golden eyes towards her.
Its whole body’s fur once again stood on end — but it was already too late.
“All people die and return to dust, now, let the rites of cremation begin.”
Moroha’s third step dark art was complete.
Its name was Incinerate.
Flames incomparable to before were made manifest, and engulfed the Metaphysical’s entire body.
The grotesque monster let out an unbearable roar of pain and writhed around.
Suddenly an awful smell akin to burning protein enveloped the area.
“Good job, Moroha.”
“Don’t let your guard down yet, something might happen.”
As Moroha said, even whilst covered in flames, the Metaphysical slowly rose.

Within the flickering, bright red flames, golden, disembodied soul like eyes burned brighter.
That unnatural vitality was another of the terrifying things about Metaphysicals.
“Do you think fire on top of fire will work…?”
Momochi was overawed and forgot about the attack.
“Who knows, we can try that too—“
Grabbing her shoulder, he retreated in God Speed Link whilst answering.
“— This time with *everyone*.”
As he sensed the presence of the other eleven that had finally arrived.

Akane Academy’s schoolyard was filled with cheers.
All of the classroom windows were open and the students within were giving thunderous applause.
Applause celebrating the wonderful extermination of a Metaphysical by the Strikers, and their triumphant return.
The whole fight had been recorded by staff of the White Knight Order and streamed live to the monitors in the classrooms and the huge screens in the schoolyard.
Everyone saw and admired the Strikers’ strength, they looked up to it, and some pined for the members.
The students were nearly all in a frenzy, calling their favourite member’s names.
The girls calling Moroha’s name, the super rookie who’d quickly risen to an ace, were particularly prevalent.
“I’m fine with being a mistress, so love me, Haimura-kun♥”
Resulting in these high pitched voices gushing forth.
Returning the same way they left, by the principal’s Etheric Portal, the somewhat ardent voices washed over Moroha, and he could only tilt his head.
“It’s already the fourth time you’ve gone, are you still not used to this mood?”
The principal, who happened to be next to him, winked playfully.
As expected of an adult’s presence, it was very amorous.
“Ah, well.”
Moroha performed reconnaissance on newly appeared Metaphyscials and investigated all of their fighting capabilities, thanks to that, the group had been able to fight so much more safely.
But Moroha himself wasn’t aware of it and even receiving the principal’s praise just made him self-conscious.
“I think you’re the amazing one.”

He didn’t want to stand there and keep having praise heaped on him, so tried a counter attack.
Moroha hadn’t yet completely escaped the sense of normal people and felt that a dark art which instantly connected two areas hundreds of kilometres apart was certainly extraordinary.
“I suppose so. With this we can send you anywhere and anytime a Metaphysical appears.”
The principal puffed up slightly with an embarrassed cough.
This technique and usage of the Strikers were large and valid reasons she had been appointed the important role of principal at a young twenty.
Indeed —
This Etheric Portal couldn’t be used by anyone other than her, so it was a secret technique among secret techniques, classified as an Origin.
In actuality, even in Shuu Saura’s memories, he didn’t know of such a cheat ability.
However,
“Isn’t ‘anywhere and anytime’ exaggerating too much?”
Isurugi, returning last through the magic circle corrected the principal.
The vanguard leaving and the rear-guard returning was the captain’s policy.
Before Moroha enlisted, the dangerous reconnaissance was wholly done by Isurugi.
In other words, it showed just how much trust he was putting in Moroha, but enough of that.
“The Etheric Portal should have several conditions on its usage. You should always keep that in mind when teaching a rookie like Haimura-kun.”
This demon of responsibility opined to the principal, feared as the Modern Witch.
“I’ve got it, geez. I’ll properly teach next time, so let’s just celebrate for now?”
The principal raised her hands in surrender.
Privately, Moroha thought that she needn’t ever teach him. He already had a smattering of knowledge from Shizuno before and received a litany of small, troublesome conditions like ‘it can only be used once a day’. If the principal knew that, then it was fine, Moroha didn’t feel he had to ask and learn.
That aside, Isurugi looked over all the member’s faces and gave thanks in a grand voice.
“Good work, ladies and gentlemen. We were able to dispatch the Metaphysical without any casualties. It’s entirely a product of your hard work. I’m grateful as your commander.”
They were words to rescind and dissolve the proclamation of a state of emergency.
The reserve corps who were surrounding them at a distance came rushing in.
“You worked hard today too, Nii-sama!”

The very first thing Satsuki did was wrap her arms around his neck.

They could hear mocking whistles from the other members.
“Don’t hug me out here like this.”
“It’s fine, we’re brother and sister after all!”
At that, Moroha was lost for words.
He smelt the rising sweet smell of a girl and was startled, worrying *“Don’t I smell of sweat now?”*
He’d promised to try and think of her as his sister, but the outcome was poor.
With the excessive skinship with a beautiful girl like this every day, even saying “It’s your sister, so think of it as sticks and stones.” Couldn’t control the speeding of his heart.
“Where did Shizuno go?”
Moroha asked, looking off into the distance.
It was half to hide his embarrassment, and half because he was actually curious at where Shizuno had gone.
“Mugh, forget about other girls! This is the happy turn of siblings safely re-uniting, right?”
Satsuki gripped him tighter with a sulky look.
“Aren’t the reserves supposed to gather here, whether they like it or not?”
Shizuno had the bad habit of ‘seriously not wanting to be a student’.
Moroha was worried whether that had surfaced again.
“She was called by, I think the Chairman? Whilst you were fighting.”
Answered Satsuki reluctantly.
Moroha’s unease deepened.
Akane Academy had the appearance of a private school, and a chairman placed as a manager.
However, as opposed to the principal, who was surprisingly open hearted and often around the students, Moroha had not once seen the chairman’s face since entering the school. It wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say he didn’t know him at all.
“What do they want with Shizuno…?”
While holding a playful Satsuki, Moroha thought half absentmindedly.
“Mugh. What are you making that worried face for, it’s only Urushibara!”
“Ah, sorry. But aren’t you curious?”
Moroha raised an eyebrow at Satsuki’s dissatisfaction.
“Hmm, well, if I had to say, I am… maybe.”
Satsuki pondered whilst holding her jaw.
The chairman and Shizuno.
Just what connection did those two people have?
If they were to compare —.
The excitement of risking his life in battle, the joy of victory, the still-lingering cheers of the students.
None of them could reach him.

While the Strikers were fighting the Metaphysical.
A man stood at the window in the chairman’s office.
His hands were clasped behind his back as he gazed on the screen in the schoolyard.
He focussed on how the Strikers fought, or more precisely, on how Moroha conducted himself.
Moroha using both light techniques and dark arts before his eyes was irresistible.
On the serious face of the man, his lips slowly curved into a smile.
Simply because he couldn’t resist.
Like that, the man placed a hand into his pocket and withdrew a ringing phone.
Without moving his gaze even an atom from Moroha, he answered.
“Hello, Tadanori, are you well?**”**
And heard amiable, beautifully pronounced English.
“Exceedingly so.**”**
The man called Tadanori fluently used English and responded respectfully.
“Oh? Did something good happen?**”**
“Right now, I’m watching that Haimura Moroha’s fighting style.**”**
“How nice! Then, how is the Ancient Dragon? As expected?**”**
“Indeed, it’s a shame you can’t receive this video.**”**
“Neither of us make these things public, there’s no helping it.**”**
“True. Well, it’s good that you’ll soon be able to watch in person.**”**
Continuing the private conversation, the man’s gaze still didn’t waver from Moroha.
Like a snake, his cruelly calculating gaze remained fixed.
“I phoned about that. My schedule allows me to be in Japan next week, so I’ll be counting on you.**”**
“I shall be waiting, Sir.**”**
The man politely hung up.
The one on the other end of the phone was an outstanding Saviour, and an easy person to talk to.
An accomplice going straight along with his plan.
His footwork was light and to quickly co-operate he promised to arrive in Japan.
Just a little further, to reinforce his plan, some preparations were required.
“The Ancient Dragon has finally appeared, and appeared in my country at that. I must make the best use of this once in a lifetime fortune.”
As he monologued, Shizuno knocked at the door.
Earlier, he had summoned her.
The man sat at his desk and called for her to enter.

She would certainly have to take on a role in his scheme.

Chapter 1 – The Darkness Binding Urushibara Shizuno

The chairman's office was in a corner of the educational affairs building.
She had been called while Moroha was still in the midst of battle, so walked towards it discontentedly.
The room was spacious and luxurious. It was set up as an office, but even if a guest of honour were invited, it wouldn't appear shabby.
The desk was Italian-made, out of Chinese Evergreen Oak.
On top of the desk, the office's owner had his hands together.
He appeared to be an extremely able man in his mid-twenties.
Among his ten siblings he was scolded by his grandfather for 'having no dignified presence' and 'looking seedy' but for better or worse, his quick wits had been effective and he was a youth with intelligence visible in his bearing.
He was this school's chairman.
He was a normal person, not a Saviour, but he was an investor and the chairman.
His name was Urushibara Tadanori.
Indeed, Shizuno's older brother.
"It's been a while."
With his hands still together on the desk, he said without a smile.
"You returned today?"
Shizuno asked, her emotions equally removed from her face.
Doing so, her face fell into a 'mask-like' expression.
"I did. Starting from the Chinese branch, Russia's, France's, Britain's, America's, it's been two months since I've been in Japan."
"Thank you for your work."
Shizuno insincerely thanked him.
The sibling's relationship was completely frigid, even the brother knew that now.
However, it wasn't in a serious way.
"It's belated, but congratulations on your enrolment, Shizuno. I trust you are leading a school life befitting a woman of the Urushibara family?"
In the Urushibara household, there weren't familial feelings between parents, children and siblings, but the cold bonds of hierarchy.
For generations they had been renowned for producing bureaucrats, a result of focussing on the family rather than the individual.
"Oh, I wonder? It's not particularly different than a normal high school, have you no confidence?"
Shizuno replied emotionlessly, with her face like a mask.
Normally he would have appeared struck by lightning and say "And that's supposed to be a woman of the Urushibara family!?" but this time,

“How humble. You’ve been highly active in the short time since enrolment have you not?”
He grinned broadly.
As if his race horse had won the race.
“Just the three of you took down the hydra with the largest number of heads, didn’t you? The principal praised you highly.”
The other day, a nine-headed hydra had suddenly appeared near the academy and been defeated by Moroha.
Strictly speaking, Shizuno and Satsuki had just happened to also be there, but they had lied and said the three of them defeated it.
Because if they left it with Satsuki having helped, she could join the Strikers.
“Grandfather places a great deal of stock in the White Knight agency. From here on out it will gain more and more global influence. Even our family must make inroads with them.”
“I’ve heard that so much my ears have callouses.”
“You standing out as a Saviour makes me proud too.”
It seemed her brother had bought the lie, so Shizuno relaxed.
However.
“Haimura… Moroha was it? The Ancient Dragon.”
Whatever he was thinking, her brother speaking Moroha’s name so suddenly surprised her.
He suddenly stood and looked over the courtyard from the window, at the screen there, which showed the Strikers fighting the Metaphysical in real time.
Shizuno also watched as her eyes sought out and fixated on Moroha.
His calm fighting didn’t bring forth an ounce of unease, but rather, she was entranced by his strength.
“He’s prominent isn’t he? Even more so than Captain Isurugi.”
Shizuno nodded reflexively and held silent.
“I heard from your homeroom teacher, Tanaka-sensei that you get on well with him?”
Looking out of the window, she replied with her back still to him.
“We’re good friends.”
Her answer was careful, she couldn’t tell what he intended at all.
“Right, good. That’s good.”
In the end, he only nodded, congratulating her.
This was too unexpected for Shizuno.
Compared to being told to cease association with him, it was a hundred times better.
But Shizuno couldn’t relax.
In fact, she had a bad feeling.
“Invite him to our house.”
“Why…?”
“You’re at about the sort of age you should be getting a boyfriend.”

Hearing that, Shizuno was silent.
She shouldn't be able to ask for more than her brother, and thus the family, approving of her association with Moroha.
She'd been secretive to avoid being found out like this.
But she couldn't honestly be happy.
"You've always been critical, saying not to recklessly get close to men, what's this change of heart? After all, people of the Urushibara family can only marry for the family."
Her misgivings grew in her chest, rising.
"Nothing so dull as a change of heart, it's a change of circumstances. Haimura-kun has outstanding talent and will surely rise within the White Knight Agency. I can see that. So as your fiancé he already has value at the current moment."
Her misgivings became reality.
"Do you intend to take even Moroha as a tool of the Urushibara family?"
"You must have misheard. I merely said that if possible I would like to share in his honour."
Shizuno's fists clenched and shook.
"What are you planning, Nii-san? What are you going to have Moroha do?"
He would do anything if it were for his own ambitions or the prosperity of the Urushibara family. He'd make anyone a victim, without the slightest guilt. Putting his decades-old friend into a trap would be nothing, even family were pawns to him.
If he were to use her precious Moroha's life…
Shizuno shook her head in disgust at her imagination.
"Answer me, Nii-san."
"Why should I answer that to you?"
"So you are going to get Moroha to do something you want answer about?"
Shizuno pressed, cold vigour in her voice.
"It's our decision. You just need to agree."
Her brother, Tadanori looked back at her, gazing with even colder eyes.
They were eyes of a powerful man, used to giving orders.
Yes, her brother was a powerful man. So would never lend an ear to others words.
And Shizuno, still a child, had no ability to resist.
Her older brother had been sick of the feudal nature of the family and ran away. However, they had made preparations everywhere he went. He was denied employment, and even when he tried to find lodging, landlords would decline him. Finally, he was retrieved by the family when he was emaciated.
Now, under the pretext of treatment, but actually as punishment for defying the family, he was confined in a remote location.
Shizuno could only do as the family said, even if she ran away, she'd merely be following the same fate. She might be a Saviour, but she couldn't subsist

on mist like a sage, and she could never live by using dark arts to steam things and money from people to live.
“Then, Shizuno, make sure to invite Haimura-kun before long.”
Her brother ordered unilaterally, and returned his sight to the screens.
“What do I do? What should I do…?”
With an emotionless expression like a doll, Shizuno suffered in secret.
She felt as if her chest was being torn between the feelings of joy from being allowed to associate with Moroha, and the pressure of what her brother’s scheming would have Moroha do, and the sadness at being brandished with her worthless family circumstances.
It seemed her heart would be broken.

June.
Two months had passed since they had entered school and the first years were getting used to school in a bad way.
The thoughts of ‘I fight for justice!’ and ‘I’ll become an amazing Saviour’ had dulled, and a relaxed mood had spread throughout the school.
Even the daily practical lessons were they learnt Ancestral Arts with a fairly serious expression, and fought in training, the class’ relaxed smiles appeared every so often.
After training was over, the first year female changing room was awash with complaints.
“Ahh, lame, day after day it’s the same old basics, I’m tired of it.”
“Tanaka *really* likes boring practice, maybe it’s ‘cause his face is boring?”
“Oh no, my sweat’s made my makeup run.”
“It’s only June, it’s way too hot.”
“We’re going to have a dry rainy season this year, the weather said it’s already the average temperature for early summer.”
“I knooow, right! Argh, this is the worst.”
Drawing out getting changed would only make them even warmer, but everyone was sluggish.
They stripped off and scattered their combat uniform, and carelessly put on their school uniform.
They might make you ask ‘were they really heroes, a cut above the rest in a previous life?’ but those who didn’t remember much of those lives were like that.
One alone, Satsuki, was glaring at her surroundings in a huff.
“They’re all slacking… Just yesterday, a metaphysical appeared here, in Japan, and Nii-sama risked his life to defeat it… But do they think it happened in another world or something? They don’t have enough self-awareness as Saviours.”
She was in the middle of changing.

Standing proudly and indignant in her bra and panties, hands on her hips.
“Is losing any shame because there are no men around not proof of slacking?”
“Ugh.”
Next to her in a similar state of dress, Shizuno retorted and Satsuki clammed up.
“I-I-I-I-I-I don’t want to hear about shame from you,” with reddened cheeks, Satsuki dodged that embarrassment, changing the topic “you press your breasts into Moroha at any chance and try and seduce him!”
She then braced against the inevitably sharp-tongued response from Shizuno.
“I guess so…”
Shizuno replied half-heartedly and let loose a tiny sigh.
Satsuki was shocked. This wasn’t like the woman, who like a naked blade loved assaulting the lovely Satsuki-chan with words (these are the individual’s impressions).
“W-what’s up? You seem… a little… strange today?”
“Aren’t I always strange?”
“You actually realise you’re doing strange things!?” Satsuki retorted in surprise but soon cleared her throat and continued, “That’s not what I mean, like, are you not feeling well or something?”
She looked at Shizuno seriously worried, someone she’d have no hesitations in calling her natural enemy.
“Ever since this morning… actually no, now that I think about it, it’s been since that state of emergency yesterday, you’ve been strange.”
“Isn’t that your imagination?”
“Did something actually happen when you were called by the chairman?”
Shizuno was putting an arm through the sleeve of her uniform, but stopped for an instant.
“It was nothing major, I told you yesterday, didn’t I?”
Her face was unreadable, but her voice sounded slightly hoarse.
“Moroha’s really worried too, you know?”
At that name, Shizuno shut her eyes, and let out a big sigh this time.
She looked like she’d given up, or resolved herself.
“You’re right, I’m sorry, I don’t like worrying people.”
Shizuno put her head through her collar and looked straight at Satsuki.
It was impossible to tell what she was thinking, her eyes were like frosted glass.
“I want you to listen and not be surprised. The chairman is my brother.”
“Seriously!?”
Satsuki was astonished, telling her to not be surprised was absurd.
But it wasn’t like she had no clue – whilst they weren’t great friends, Shizuno sometimes seemed awfully knowledgeable, so she could accept her family being part of the school’s management.
“Shh. It’s not something to shout about.”

Shizuno put up a single finger and placed it against her lips.
Satsuki truly understood those feelings. Just having influential family members would mean there could be people looking to spread malicious gossip everywhere. Being a princess in her past life, Satsuki knew this well. So she glanced around to check that no one seemed to have heard, and when there didn't seem to be anyone there, she relaxed.
"I'm sorry for hiding it."
"It's fine, it's not like I cared about the chairman until yesterday."
If she'd had the interest, she'd have known his name, and if she'd known his name, she'd have soon noticed that he and Shizuno shared the same surname. However, the chairman didn't have much to do with the students, so he hadn't even come to mind until now.
"And then, and then?"
"Unlike your brother, mine is not a nice man, we've never gotten along. We fought about something pointless yesterday, so I'm a bit melancholic."
"Ah, I see. I get it, there aren't that many wonderful brothers like Moroha."
"Indeed, I'm actually really jealous of that, Ranjou-san."
The reason for Shizuno's sadness was clear. Satsuki heart cleared hearing it wasn't anything big.
And Shizuno was envious of Moroha, so Satsuki was suddenly in good spirits.
"So tell your brother too, it's nothing big."
"Right, got it! Leave it to me, Urushibara! Fwoo fwo fwo fwo."
Satsuki thumped her slim chest.
Shizuno had tired of lies, in the end she skilfully dodged the issue without the slightest bit of notice.
"That reminds me, *you've* been in high spirits recently, haven't you?"
Furthermore, she skilfully changed the subject.
"You can tell!?"
"I can, it's like you're shining."
Satsuki bit like a fish, giggling shyly at the transparent flattery.
If Satsuki was an ESPer, she'd probably see the image of Shizuno leading her by the nose in Shizuno's mind.
"I heard from Sophie-senpai," Satsuki was a member of the Strikers and brought up the name of a senior she got along well with, and after checking for anyone listening, whispered to Shizuno, "there's a rumour that the English Branch Head will be inspecting the school soon."
"Yes, I heard Sir Edward planned to do so."
Informed as always, Shizuno calmly nodded.
It wasn't a competition for Satsuki, but thanks to her, the rumour gathered evidence.
The Order consisted of six organisations.
The English main division, and the Japanese, American, French, Russian and Chinese branches.

The six founding Saviours were in command of the organisation under each country's command, so it federated like that.
They were called the Six Heads, each an unparalleled Saviour.
For example, the head of the English division, Sir Edward Lampard was known as the Invincible White Iron.
Though it more or less appeared to be a branch of the U.N., and the official name was the Anti-Metaphysical System, its popular name of 'The White Knight Order' was due to it being modelled on his flashy Ancestral Arts within those circles.
That alone made him someone who lives above the clouds. And so.
"…Does his inspection have anything to do with you, Ranjou-san?"
Asked Shizuno, as if she really didn't understand.
Still whispering into her ear, Satsuki checked once again that no one could hear and started speaking as if her words were precious.
"It really does. The English head is the highest in the White Knight Order, right? If I can show off my amazingness in front of him, he'll say something like 'Oh, what a wonderful nadeshiko girl! The Japanese branch doesn't know anything, making you a rank D. By my authority I'll make you a rank C right away.' I think."
"…Do you seriously think that?"
"Well, aren't I being underestimated? Moroha's too amazing, so I can't stand out next to him no matter what, it's like the sun and the shade, you know?"
"…You *are* a hard worker, and you progress several times faster than normal people I think."
The first year White Irons would first, as a foundation, train to be able to move prana from the seven gates around the body. Satsuki had already succeeded in using both arms and legs, and her forehead's gates. Compared to the majority of the first years, who couldn't open more than one or two, it was a jaw-dropping success.
"Right, right, the Amazing Satsuki-chan, yeah."
"But that's just compared to the other first years… right? Do you not know the difference in strength between you and the senior Strikers, even though you train with them every day? Isn't that what they call living under a rock?"
"They're mostly rank Bs! It's because I train with them every day that I'll be a rank C soon, fwo fwo fwo fwo!"
"…Even though you still can't form the foundation." Shizuno's murmur was too quiet for Satsuki to hear. "I'm sure you're made of sweetness inside."
"W-what are you praising me for all of a sudden? Am I that cute inside? Ehe he…"
Satsuki lowered her head in embarrassment.
Shizuno watched expressionlessly. However, her eyes that had lost their light spoke more eloquently than anything, saying. "She's an idiot."
"Do your best, Ranjou-san."

“W-what’s this turn of events, are you supporting me?”
“Is that a problem?”
“N-not at all… it makes me happy, but… won’t it be annoying if I become a rank C and a full member of the Strikers before you?”
“You’re a hard worker, effort should be rewarded properly.”
“Uuuh… Thank you, Urushibaraa!”
Satsuki was moved, and grabbed both of Shizuno’s hands and swung them back and forth.
If Shizuno, with her mask like expression looked dejected, that was surely a trick of the light.

While Satsuki and Shizuno were playing in the girl’s changing room, Moroha changed quickly and headed towards the school affairs building with the principal’s office.
He was awfully curious about what kind of connection Shizuno had to the chairman. Asking her just lead to her evading the question, so he thought he’d investigate himself and ask someone who should know.
He only had the time until home room was over, so he was hurrying.
Despite that, as he walked rapidly through the corridors,
“Ah, it’s Haimura-kun!” Three senior girls saw him and called out to him.
He didn’t know any of their names or faces.
It was just after practical lessons, but the three’s makeup was soft and well done.
Even though they were average looking to begin with, they worked hard to be stylish and were the type good at showing their charms.
This kind of girl was often the most popular with men.
“You were awesome yesterday. We were cheering you on.”
They bounced over and surrounded Moroha.
He didn’t really have time to chat in the corridors, but he could tell at a glance that they had no ill will, so it was hard to be cruel to them.
“Hey, hey, you were training in Ancestral Arts before you came here, right?”
“How old were you when you remembered your past lives?”
“Oh, oh, and what’s it feel like to have two past lives you remember?”
Shrill voices barraged him with questions.
In the confusion, they were feeling all over his upper arms and stomach.
Girls lost their reserve when they made up groups.
“Again, huh…”
Moroha smiled wryly mentally.
As Moroha had become famous within the school, this kind of thing happened constantly.

He was a supernova, the first since the founding of the school to immediately join the Strikers.
And, he was the first Ancient Dragon in recorded history.
He understood the sense of curiosity. Moroha himself didn't think the rapidly swirling and changing events surrounding him were normal.
The days he just wanted to learn the Ancestral Arts he could and slip into an office job with the White Knight Order felt like the distant past.
"Hey, hey, you're good at teaching too, right? You're always in demand, yeah?"
"Haimura-kun can take on White Irons and Black Mages, lecture us too."
"In exchange, we'll teach you something *nice.* ♥"
Regardless of being in different years, girls would often gather around him and talk like this.
"Ah, I'm sorry, but I'm booked for quite a while. Actually, I'm a little busy right now."
With a troubled face, Moroha explained, but.
"Kyaa, he's so popular! ♥"
They screeched in what sounded like an ultrasonic voice.
"Ah no, it's like he's not taking notice of us."
"Is it because we didn't joing the Strikers reserve corps? No waay."
They were lightly playing as they clasped their hands in front of themselves.
They didn't appear shocked at all as they giggled.
"So, I'm sorry, but I've got to go."
"Bye bye, see you lateer!"
If he was free, he wouldn't have minded chatting for a while, but he was in a hurry today.
With the three waving him off, he quickly headed to the principal's office.
This time he made it, and knocked on the door.
"Go ahead."
A sweet voice came from within.
It still had the remnants of youth but it was a serene, clear voice.
If angels existed and were to speak, they'd probably have a sweet voice like this.
"Excuse me."
Moroha entered the room politely where a roughly ten year old girl waiting for him, smiling.
She looked like a young version of the principal, and angel like girl with blonde hair and blue eyes.
Actually, she was probably a relative. He imagined her always with the principal, like an extra.

Her innocent smile was lovely too.
She was sitting on the sofa for guests, chewing on a rice cracker and watching television.
On the other side of the room, the desk was empty, it looked like the principal was out.
“Umm, do you know where the principal is?”
“You can wait here until Mari-oneechan comes back.”
Still with her carefree smile, the angel patted the sofa next to her.
“Let’s do that I guess.”
Rather than going searching for her and possibly missing her, Moroha sat on the opposite sofa.
As he did, she got up, purposely moved over to Moroha and gripped onto his arm.
“W-what is it?”
Moroha shifted back.
He had a sense that this girl would be hard to deal with.
If he thought back, after the bout with the class’ tyrant Isurugi, she’d used mana to heal him.
And given him a chaste kiss.
Even thinking *“That was a medical treatment! It doesn’t count!”* his heart still wept with the guilt of kissing a little girl.
“…Why are you clinging to me?”
“If I don’t cling to someone, I’ll die.”
He did remember her always hugging the principal, but.
“That’s a lie, right?”
“That’s a lie.”
The angel smiled happily.
Moroha was suddenly tired, but she held on tighter.
“Ehe.”
Seeing her happy smile like this was bad for his heart.
“Don’t you go to school?”
To distract himself from his embarrassment, Moroha began talking with her.
She gave a bright and happy smile and smoothly brought up something rather heavy.
“I awoke as a Saviour much younger than most people, so the rules say I can’t go to elementary school. The lofty spirit of compulsory education is dead.”
Moroha’s expression froze.
“So I’m with Mari-oneechan every day.”
“I-I see, don’t you play with friends?”
“I don’t go to school, so I don’t have any, teehee.”
“That’s… not something to smile about. Yeah, it’s not…”
A heavy gloom settled around Moroha’s shoulders.
He couldn’t look at that angelic smile, and hesitantly offered.

“I-I see… then how about we talk until the principal gets back?”
“Wah! I’m so happy!”
He couldn’t help but pity her being so excited about that.
The angel called herself Shimon Maya.
She used katakana for her first name because the kanji were difficult and she didn’t like the impression they gave, and she asked him.
“If you can, lengthen it to ‘Maaya’ and it’ll be cuter.”
Girls were fussy over their charming points, so Moroha readily agreed, and told her she could just call him ‘Moroha’ in return.
Just by changing what they called each other, the atmosphere became friendlier.
It seemed she thought so too, changing her seat again, wriggling into the space between his legs and leaning her back against him.
“Err.”
Moroha tilted his head.
It was fine because she was a child, but if she was a little older and still this defenceless, she’d probably give men the wrong idea.
“Well, I’ll leave teaching her how to be a lady to the principal.”
Moroha came to a decision and looked up, chuckling at the same time as Maya who was doing the same thing nearly directly beneath his head.
“I’ve actually wanted to speak with you for a while, Moroha.”
Maya started the conversation with a smile.
“I’m hope I’m good to speak with then.”
What was popular with children these days? TV, manga, games, the internet? He hoped they’d be able to find a topic, but there might be a generation gap, he’d grown up as a poor boy, so wasn’t really familiar with games or the internet.
“There’s something I really really want to ask you.”
What could it be?
Most likely she was like those seniors from earlier and curious about being an Ancient Dragon?
Maybe it was about what it was like to have two past lives, if it was chaotic.
Well, she was a child, so he didn’t really mind.
“You can ask what you like.”
He was in a brotherly mood, and promised without thinking about it properly.
And then, with an angelic smile, Maya asked:
“What’s it like having two girlfriends? Is it chaotic?”
Moroha’s smile stuck on his face.
His mind froze on what she’d said, on what she’d asked.
This angel.
He couldn’t believe what he’d heard from her adorable face!
“Ha… ha ha ha… you’re precocious aren’t you Maaya.”
“It’s rude to treat me like a child. And that’s a transparent evasion, teehee.”
Don’t you teehee me.

Moroha looked glumly at the angel.
And now she was teasing him!
“I don’t know what kind of rumours are going around school, but I’m not two timing or anything.”
He answered with dead eyes.
“So if you’re not two timing, you’re a harem king?”
“What’s with that broad interpretation, it’s scary…”
“Can I be a candidate?”
Maya raised her hand with an angelic smile.
“Think about your age.”
Looking like he was dying, Moroha lowered her hand.
“So I can be in your harem in a few years?”
“Don’t say it like that, there isn’t a harem.”
“So just loving two girlfriends fills your capacity?”
“I won’t deny that Satsuki and Shizuno are special and precious but…”
“Got it, then I’ll work hard to be precious too.”
“You don’t get it at all…”
“I’m a hard worker you know?”
Maya nonchalantly reached out her hand and stroked Moroha’s lap.
“Uhh…”
Moroha groaned in dismay.
He’d thought it was fine because she was a child, but having Maya sat between his thighs felt wrong now, like he was committing a crime.
“Why are you that attached to me?”
Moroha turned eyes that you’d use to implore a child on her.
Praying that she’d say something like “It was all a joke.” He’d wholeheartedly forgive her.
Without the slightest hesitation, Maya beamed with all her might and said.
“Because you have poor fortune with women.”
“Isn’t that weird logic!?”
Also without hesitation, Moroha retorted with all his might.
He remembered her saying “You’ll suffer greatly with lots of girls, and make lots of girls cry.”
He didn’t want to, but he reluctantly admitted it was true.
“So wouldn’t you avoid me? You don’t want to cry, do you?”
“Rather than a tedious peace and quiet, I want a life filled with excitement and adventure.”
“You think more dangerously than you look, don’t you.”
He’d thought she was a pure angel, but she was a girl that would risk herself on a gamble.
The feelings of “Then I’ll protect her!” that this evoked made it worse. She was a bad girl that would make a lot of men cry.
“So let’s get on well from now on, Moroha.”
“Y-yeah… sure.”

Moroha smiled somewhat haggardly at Maya, who seemed to be in a good mood.
At that moment, the bell signalling the end of home room sounded.
If he didn't go back to the classroom now, he'd be late.
"The principal sure is late."
Moroha glanced around restlessly.
"Mari-oneechan will be a while longer."
"Tell me that earlier."
"She's meeting with the chairman at the moment, so waiting here was certain."
Maya's words were logical, and it's not like she'd lied.
But Moroha suspected she'd purposely not said much because she wanted someone to talk to. He half closed his eyes.
"Well, whatever."
He soon changed his mind, he wouldn't have been able to meet the principal anyway, and it wasn't a bad thing getting to know Maya. It wasn't a waste of time at all.
"I actually wanted to ask something about him. I'll come again then."
"Umm, you can ask me too you know?"
Moroha looked at her in question.
"I'm not with the principal all day for nothing, I know a lot about the school."
Maya cleared her throat and threw up her arms in celebration.
Now that he thought about it, she seemed fairly clever. Despite that, he'd been careless and overlooked her as a child.
"You know Urushibara Shizuno? You know her right, you said I was two timing her earlier?"
"You're harsh, Moroha…"
"Anyway, I want to know why the chairman called her suddenly yesterday.
"I don't know why either, but they're siblings."
"So that's it."
Moroha had investigated himself and found they had the same surname and guessed that.
The problem was why Shizuno acted oddly right after a meeting with her brother.
"But, they don't seem to get on well as siblings."
He was satisfied with Maya's addition.
"Do you know about the Urushibara family, Moroha?"
"No, Shizuno doesn't really talk about her family…"
So Maya told him everything she knew.
The family was an investor in the school and had strong ties to the Japanese branch of the White Knight Order.
The chairman was more of a politician than a teacher, and an ambitious person too.

For example, he'd had Saviours from the Japanese branch train Shizuno before she started school and recommended her for the Strikers through the principal.
He intended to have Shizuno excel as a Black Mage and rise through the ranks of the White Knight Order, so had given strict orders to people involved in the school to train her properly.
It was as if he was the sort of person that thought of even his own sister as a tool for his ambitions.
Moroha listened without a single interruption.
"Considering all that, it's surprising the teachers leave her lack of motivation alone."
In the school, Shizuno's name was like a synonym for a lantern at noon.
But he'd never really seen anyone condemn her for it.
"The chairman is a politician, so he doesn't understand, Mari-oneechan and the other teachers are Saviours before they're teachers. They work by their own creed, and don't oblige organisations or the courts. No one will treat her preferentially."
It felt strange to hear such difficult topics one after another from an adorable girl, but Moroha stroked her head.
She seemed to enjoy it, rubbing her head up into his hand.
"I don't think Shizuno-oneechan will stop worrying with a brother like that, but while she's here, Mari-oneechan and the others won't let it go like the chairman plans. They all respect Shizuno-oneechan's desires."
"Yeah… I see. That was reassuring."
Thinking of the principal and his class' teacher's faces, Moroha earnestly replied.
Moroha had always been wary of exaggerated claims of creeds and such, but even he felt that self-respect.
"I think I get it now…"
He remembered before he came to Akane Academy.
He'd earnestly considered a shady offer worded "Why don't you enter a school for Saviours and learn to fight Metaphysicals?", and the interaction and explanation from the agent that came was extremely sincere, so left a lot of good will.
Moroha wasn't afraid of danger.
However, he was fussy about fairness, and things being done in the proper way.
At the school's root was that young and completely clear cut principal.
"Is that enough for you?"
"Yeah. You've really taken a load of my chest, thank you, Maaya."
He stroked her head once more.
"I'm going back to class then."
He half rose to his feet.
"I want to talk more."
Before Maya pushed him down with all her weight.

“Wait a minute, I have home room now.”
“Skip it, teehee.”
Don’t teehee me.
The angel said something awful with a cute face.
“I can’t skip without a reason though.
Moroha was a student with high morals.
“It’s fine if your stomach hurts.”
“My stomach’s not often like that.”
“Oh no, my stomach is hurting.”
“Your stomach sure is flexible.”
“If you won’t speak with me, I’ll come with you to the classroom like this and sit in your lap and hug you.”
“Are you joking?”
“I’m serious.”
She knew how to threaten with a smile!
Moroha was at a loss.
Eventually, Maya cried.
“Uuugh, I’m so sad. I finally found someone to talk to after having no friends. But when he got what he wanted, he just threw me away, like I was a woman of convenience to him. As if I were a scrap of cloth. Moroha really is an awful person that makes girls cry.”
Even though she was a child, she’d mastered threatening with complaints!
“I get it, I get it.”
Moroha raised his hands in surrender.
“Isurugi-senpai and the demon vice-captain are super scary when they’re angry, so I’m not skipping after school, okay?”
Telling the angel he’d play until then.
“I’m so happy.”
Maya lifted her head and smiled without worry.
It was an innocent smile from the bottom of her heart.
In the face of that satisfaction, Moroha’s ‘high morals’ were flexible.

Chapter 2 – Witches of the Shimon Family

“What are you thinking!?”
A critical voice doused the calm mood in a little restaurant.
It was Akane Academy’s principal, Shimon Mari.
Mari had been invited to a late lunch with the chairman after the meeting ran on for a while, and was now half standing, glaring at her dinner partner.
If you wondered what they were talking about, it was because he had suddenly brought up a horrifying plan.
It was the kind of plan that people wouldn’t think people could be happy about thinking of.
“Don’t you understand that’s essentially the same as sending Haimura-kun to his death!? He’s not a tool for your politics!”
The corners of her eyes lifted, glaring at him as if laying a curse upon him.
The chairman let that wash straight over him and rebuked her as he calmly sliced his sautéed sea bream.
“Calm yourself, principal. There may not be any other customers, but choose your time and place.”
He’d not lose to the craftiest of politicians with that dignity and collectedness.
“Kuh…”
Mari glared even more, but could only follow his instruction to calm down.
She was an exceptional Saviour, One of the academy’s first generation of students, the first generation captain of the Strikers, a Black Mage that held an Origin, and one of not even ten rank As within Japan.
Though she was still twenty, for Saviours like her that had many of the memories from her previous life, the common sense of not taking opinions from young people didn’t apply. Even her inauguration as the principal, rather than being a large exception was something that often happened within the White Knight Order; in the first place, even the Six Heads at the top of the organisation were nearly all below thirty.
Mari thought that from that point of view, that for a ‘young’ twenty year old normal person that wasn’t a Saviour like the chairman to hold his post was an exception.
He was an amazing man whose opinions belied his youth.
Of course, those opinions weren’t just pure.
Mari continued barraging the chairman with a wary gaze as he continued eating with a composed expression.
Sitting down and lowering her tone, she continued her warning.
“Haimura-kun is someone who can become a valuable asset to our country. Please, rethink gutting the goose that lays the golden eggs.”

“That’s exactly why keeping him cooped up is no use, I believe it’s a fool’s act.”
“Just as we do for the other students, give him time, his growth needs to be watched over.”
“I’m telling you, that’s a waste of time. He shouldn’t be secluded in Akane Academy.”
“Even if we were to ignore your words. It should be clear from looking at Russia how awful an effect ignoring the school system will have, no? Just focussing on strength-“
“and neglecting the heart will create distorted Saviours. Yes, a wonderful general view. It’s general though! From your report, Haimura-kun already has a balanced personality, correct? Or was that a mistake?”
“If it isn’t this, it’s that…”
Mari could only grit her teeth.
“Regardless, I’m opposed. I can’t approve of sending Haimura-kun down a path of war when he’s still awakening!”
“That’s a misrepresentation, principal. I merely wish to place Haimura-kun in a place suitable for one of his stature.”
His real motive was to use Moroha well, and he had the nerve to dress it up like it was something good.
“He’s so taken with the Urushibara family, what a blockheaded idiot…”
If the opponent was someone for whom words were meaningless, all that was left was to fight.
That was a Saviour’s manner. That was Mari’s creed.
“Are we done here, chairman?”
“We are, but for one more thing. Haimura-kun will be at our house often from now on, he’s my Shizuno’s friend. He’ll probably be back late or stay over too, so I’d like you to give him an exception for having to request to stay outside of the dormitory each time.”
Mari was so angry she forgot to reply.
“And he’s even using Shizuno-san as seasoning!”
Mari could only feel disgust that the chairman only saw even his own sister as a tool for his politics.
Whether he realised it himself or not, it was a terrifyingly precise method of persuasion.
As Mari saw it, Moroha wasn’t a fool, and he was sturdy to the core.
Even if the chairman tried to use him, he wouldn’t simply go along with it.
However, if he were taken with Shizuno, might it be surprisingly easier?
“…I understand. Excuse me then.”
With one final glare at the chairman, Mari rose.
“The main dish is still to come.”
“I’m fine.”
She didn’t want to stay in this unpleasant place any more.
“Then I can send a car.”
“That’s fine too.”

While treading heavily, she left the restaurant, squared her shoulders and walked to the school.

“He thinks he can do what he wants with my students does he!?”
She walked a fairly long distance but was still angry for the entire time.
She returned to her office, still fed up.
“Welcome back.”
Maya greeted her with an angelic smile, sitting on the sofa.
It was an adorable smile that made you want to hug her and rub your cheeks together.
It was really soothing, and her anger finally dissipated.
“You just missed him. Moroha was here until just now.”
“Eh, Moroha was here? Why?”
“He talked to me. It was really fun and he’s my friend now.”
“My my, that’s good.”
Seeing Maya’s innocent happiness, the principal smiled.
She’d struck on a good idea.
“Fu fu, Shizuno-san is certainly charming, but my Maaya won’t lose to her.”
Putting on her big sister face, she sat down next to the child of her distant relative.
“Hey, Maaya. I want to protect Haimura-kun, but…”
She whispered the idea she just had into her ear.
Maya was a good girl.
She agreed straight away.

Akane Academy was a boarding school, so of course, Moroha lived in a dormitory.
The words ‘boy’s dormitory’ might bring to mind filth, but it was actually a clean building like a hotel. The newly established school didn’t show off.
Moroha’s room was on the third floor, a wooden floored western room.
It was a completely private room and he didn’t have a room-mate.
He didn’t have many personal belongings, but it was furnished with a bed, desk, wardrobe, LCD television, bookshelves and the everyday necessities.
Above all, because Moroha was poor, he was happy that there was even the tool he most wanted, a computer.
It was nearly the latest desktop, and he amused himself by surfing the net in his free time.
He was a beginner so he was sometimes confused on how to use it, but Moroha had a trustworthy ally.
“Yes, it’s a common problem, nothing to worry about.”
A clear voice sounded from the phone, it was no one else but Shizuno.
“The browser probably blocked the pop-up?”
The browser (a person?) blocked (defended against?) the pop-up (a technique?)…
“Sorry, I’m not talking about martial arts right now, the site I’m looking at-“

“Use clairvoyance or something and find the button labelled ‘tools’.”
Shizuno-san was super thorough!
So, every time he had trouble with the computer, he’d cling to his phone.
He sometimes worried he was taking advantage of her or causing her bother, but Shizuno never showed a sign of dislike and patiently explained to him as he missed the mark.
Once the problem was solved, they’d always move into a meandering conversation.
“That girl that’s always clinging to the principal’s called Maaya, I found that out today.”
They talked about the things they couldn’t during the after school training.
“So that’s your type of girl, Moroha?”
“Why’s that come up…”
Why did everyone ignore the problem of age?
“Well, she’s a little strange in some ways, but she’s honest and cute, you know? The kind of girl that’d make a good little sister?”
“I see. I’ll tell Ranjou-san tomorrow.”
“I’m sorry forgive me let it slide.”
Moroha earnestly apologised for his slip of the tongue.
“Her beloved brother has been stolen, poor Ranjou-san, sniffle.”
“Don’t br-“
“If you want me to keep it a secret, call me beautiful ten times in front of Ranjou-san.”
“Either way, there’s going to be bloodshed…”
“It’s a joke. If you want me to keep it secret, treat me to a date.”
“Always looking down on people…”
“By the way, I always record my phone calls with you, so I have plenty of proof.”
“You need to tell people that beforehand.”
Even though he knew it was a joke, Moroha couldn’t help but retort.
On the other end of the line, Shizuno probably had dimples at the edges of her mouth.
“…Let’s talk seriously then.”
And then, Shizuno’s tone suddenly changed.
“About Maaya?”
“Yes. You might not know it, but awakening too early as a Saviour is an unfortunate thing. They live enclosed lives, they can’t go to school, and making friends is nearly impossible.”
Moroha was surprised to notice a certain emotion mixed in with her quiet recitation.
“You seem amazingly sympathetic…”
He heard a sharp intake of breath as if to say ‘damn it’ from the other end of the phone.
“Well, it’s no mistake that she’s an unfortunate child.”
After a while, Shizuno spoke to keep up her façade.

“So it may not be a bad thing for her to catch your eye and you look after her.”
Moroha agreed with that himself, Maya didn’t only see darkness, but no child should be as okay not being able to make friends.
However.
“That’s unusually proactive for you, don’t you think?”
“I’m not sympathetic with her or anything.”
Shizuno’s voice roughening like that was rare, it was suspicious.
“If nothing else is bothering you, it’s late so shall we leave it here?”
Shizuno spoke bluntly with a sharp voice.
“Ah, my bad. You helped me out, thanks as always.”
Moroha hurriedly thanked her.
Shizuno had really helped him, in many ways, he couldn’t repay that.
He couldn’t really put his happiness into words.
“It’s fine,” At this, Shizuno’s sharp mood lessened. You could tell even over the phone, “being able to help my king is my joy.”
Shizuno’s unintentional answer took Moroha aback.
“You really are the Witch of the Underworld, are-“
Before he could finish his question, she hung up.
“Tch.”
He smiled wryly before leaning back in his chair and staring up at the ceiling.
Gazing at the spotless paper, he lost himself in thought.
“An enclosed life, huh…”
Moroha knew that Maya was in a unique situation.
If nothing else, her not being able to go to school exemplified that.
So would Shizuno, born into a strict family, with a bothersome brother not also be in a unique situation? Moroha suddenly couldn’t answer that.
“Is she really not sympathetic?”
He doubted it.
And then, if Shizuno was sympathetic to Maya, trapped by circumstances–
Then Shizuno herself was–
“…No, thinking it over is useless.”
Moroha shook his head and shook out his wandering thoughts.
Shizuno was right, it was late.
Suddenly.
An energetic knock sounded from his door.
Moroha tilted his head in puzzlement.
Maybe it was a friend from one of the neighbouring rooms? He’d dealt with anything he’d borrowed, and the end of term test was still long enough away that it wouldn’t be someone asking for help with studying.
Still puzzled, he opened the door.
“Maaya express delivery service. I’ve brought a delivery from Mari-oneechan.”
He froze with the door open.

His thoughts derailed.
The world stopped.
At this time of night, in the boys dorm, in front of his room, was an angel, throwing her arms in the air.
“Express… delivery… service?”
As his head finally started working again, he slowly asked.
Was this a prank that was popular with primary school students at the moment?
Maya didn’t go to school though.
“I’ve brought the world’s warmest, softest, cutest body pillow for your restful sleep.”
She threw her arms up again.
“Where?”
“Here.”
She threw her arms up again.
Using her entire small body, she single-mindedly appealed to him.
“So I’m supposed to hug you and sleep?”
“That’s right.”
Moroha swiftly shut the door.
“You’re awful, let me in please. If you leave me in this wolf’s den, I won’t come back alive.”
Maya pounded at the door while complaining.
“And who was the one who walked alone into that wolf’s den?”
“I had to. It’s the principal’s decision.
“Huh?”
It might be to get him to let her in, but if it was true, he’d need to listen.
Well, if she smiled and said it was a lie, then he could kick her out, so he let her in.
It’d be bad for his reputation if she was too noisy.
That said, it’d be bad for his friends around that could hear and read the mood.
“What a tasteless room.”
Were the first words from Maya as she entered the room and scrutinised it.
“Why you… weren’t you supposed to be for peaceful sleep? Or did you bring something irritating that would make it impossible to sleep?”
Moroha narrowed his eyes at her as he got a cushion for her.
“But I think it really suits you and is a cool room, teehee.”
Damn it, he couldn’t stay angry at her when she was cute.
Moroha shrugged his shoulders and shook his head.
When he saw Maya daintily sit on the cushion, he sat back in his chair.
“What do you mean by the principal’s decision?”
“From today, I’m your room-mate.”
Where should he even begin?
“And how did *that* come about?”

“Mari-oneechan can freely change the school and dormitory rules. The principal’s a dictator.”
The young girl could call her relative a dictator with a smile.
“There’s way too many problems with that…”
Having a young boy and girl (one far too young) living in one room and such.
Moroha felt a headache coming on.
“First of all, don’t you disagree, Maaya?”
“If it wasn’t you, I definitely would you know?”
She innocently spoke to put him at ease.
What a terrifying girl.
“Do you disagree then, Moroha?”
“Well, yeah.”
“Um, ah, so you’re fine with giving me trauma and a deep wound on my heart?”
“My bad, you’re perfectly welcome.”
Maya cheered in joy.
“It’s my first time sleeping with a boy, I’m really nervous.”
“And I’m really irritated with the principal.”
Moroha imitated her way of speaking and dropped his shoulders.
He couldn’t understand what the principal was thinking, taking these measures.
The principal’s smug grin somehow appeared in his mind.
“Your relative’s really not cute… Not looking after you properly…”
If Moroha was in her position, there’s no way he’d send someone this young to stay in a boy’s room.
As he was grumbling, Maya mumbled with a sigh.
“It’s the opposite, Moroha.”
The smile on her face changed slightly, seeming lonely and somehow adult as she explained apologetically.
“I can’t make friends because I can’t go to school. All the students here are busy becoming strong and don’t have enough time for me. And then, because you alone were kind to me, Mari-oneechan has an eye on you, and even abused her authority for me. So if you’re going to blame anyone, blame me.”
Protecting the principal.
She really couldn’t still be a child, that innocence pierced his chest.
“Sure.”
Moroha awkwardly scratched his head.
“Shizuno said that earlier anyway.”
He stood and sat down in front of Maya.
“I’m your room-mate from now on, Moroha, let’s get on.”
He gently put his hand out.
“I’m your room-mate from now on, Maaya. I might be inexperienced, but please take care of me.”

Maya shook his hand with her small hand.
Seeing that innocent shaking, he couldn't help but smile.
He was living with a young girl…
He'd impulsively agreed earlier, but after speaking with Maya, his regrets were growing.
"Moving in is fine, but where's your things?"
"Mari-oneechan will be sending them soon, until then, I'd like to borrow yours."
"Your bed, or a futon?"
"We can sleep together. I'm small so I won't take your space, I'm a compact, energy efficient model."
"No, that's a little…"
"It's like I said before, you can think of me as a body pillow."
"Seriously…"
"There's no other choice."
"By the way, what are we doing about changing?"
"I don't really mind if you see."
"I don't really want to be seen though…"
"Then, when you're changing, I'll cover my eyes like this."
"Anyway, you don't even have pyjamas do you? Just the clothes on your back?"
"I'd like to borrow a T-shirt tonight."
"Your toothbrush?"
"Ah, I've already done that, my bath too."
"And what about bathing after tomorrow?"
"I'll borrow that shower. I'm sure it'll be fun together, teehee."
"Uh, uhh, I prefer the public baths than the shower."
"You don't need to worry you know? I'm still young enough I can use the men's side."
"I really do like the baths."
Their conversation really made him feel how high the hurdles they'd have to overcome were and he held his head.
"Let's sleep, let's just sleep. Today's been really tiring."
Moroha sluggishly found a T-shirt for Maya to use as pyjamas and got into bed.
"I want to put this here every night."
Maya took something out of her pouch and set it on the end of the television rack.
It was a complicatedly cut crystal, with many faces.
"Wouldn't it have been better to leave expensive things?"
Moroha didn't lock the room, so it was an issue with security.
"But I'm in the middle of raising it, so I can't be too far away from it."
"Raising it? …A stone?"
Moroha narrowed his eyes at it.
He could see the air around it shimmer ever so slightly.

Proof that it was leaking a faint amount of mana.
“It’s long, but I can explain it?”
“Ah, it’s fine, I’m tired.”
Moroha waved his hand and Maya really did innocently start changing, so he pulled the sheets over his head so he couldn’t see.
Maya defencelessly entered those sheets.
Moroha’s T-shirt was cute on her and fit just like a baggy dress.
“Good night, Moroha.”
Maya hugged on to him as if it were only natural.
She was only slender, but it was as if her entire body was made out of soft flesh as she attached herself to him.
Moroha’s face grew sweaty.
The time was probably too much for her and she was quickly sound asleep.
“Is this… really not a crime?”
Moroha was nervous and didn’t feel like sleeping.
With a sigh, he made up his mind and reached for his phone, on charge on the desk.
She might already be sleeping, but he dialled Satsuki’s number.
“What do you want at this time of night, Nii-sama!? Think about me a little will you!”
Satsuki answered on the second ring.
Almost as if she were waiting for the call.
“My bad, I have something to talk to you about, is now okay?”
Moroha spoke quietly to not wake up Maya.
“Whaat? C-c-c-c-could it be!? You were lying in bed and suddenly want to hear your sister’s voice?”
Moroha considered just hanging up.
But that wouldn’t solve the problem, so he cleared his throat and began speaking.
“Erm, this is for a friend, he’s troubled on how to treat someone who’s… like his sister.”
“Hoh hoh! So you came to me, the little sister authority for help?”
What an awful authority.
He thought she’d interrupt with “Are you talking about me!?” but it seemed she really didn’t even consider it was about her.
The bonds of siblings truly were trusty, ha ha ha.
“A little sister like girl, not at all blood related who was much younger than him suddenly showed up at his house. She said she wanted to sleep in the same bed and bathe together, what do you think?”
“She’s not at all related? Is she tempting him?”
The answer he most didn’t want to hear.
“But they’re really different ages? About five years.”
“My papa and mama are eight years apart, you know?”
“…He still only sees her as a child.”

“Guys are like that. They’re soo condescending. So she might be trying extreme measures to appeal to him like an adult?”
“…She herself knows she’s a child.”
“Reeeally? She’s not fairly precocious? If you look closely, isn’t she like that?”
“…So the outlook’s dark?”
“In my expert opinion, it’s pitch black! No doubt!”
Satsuki replied immediately, as if it were completely natural.
“…If he were to sleep in the same bed, you don’t think he’d be committing a crime?”
At his imploring question, Satsuki cackled through the phone.
Moroha grew disheartened at her lack of understanding.
While still acting strangely, she grew a little serious.
“If your friend really thinks of her as just a child then there’s no real issue. But, if he’s even slightly aroused, he shouldn’t it’ll just lead to sadness for both of them.”
She smoothly answered.
Almost as if she were asked that question every day.
“That seems like a fairly normal answer?”
“Shouldn’t it? Whether related by blood or not, there’s lots of little sisters in the world, so how to treat them is perfectly normal.
What an authority, he finally decided.
“Thanks, Satsuki.”
Moroha gave his gratitude with a multitude of emotions in it.
“B-b-but you know? If you were to take responsibility, even if you got aroused over me-“
“See you tomorrow then, night.”
Going over her explanation again, he absentmindedly hung up and didn’t notice Satsuki’s final mumblings.
He put the phone back on charge and looked at the peacefully sleeping angel’s face.
Honestly, Moroha was often aroused by Satsuki’s defenceless skinship.
There were times he had to exercise great self-restraint.
But now, looking at Maya’s face as she slept, he only felt happy.
“That’s okay then.”
Refreshed, Moroha hugged Maya and slept.
Her selling points of being warm, soft and cute were no lies.

Late at night, a private jet from England arrived at Haneda airport.
Two people descended down the ramp.
In front a tall, white man was humming as he stepped along with the rhythm onto Japanese soil.

“Tanta, taan, taan, taan, taan, tata♪”
The starlight shone softly on his silver hair. He looked like an actor and dandy, but the tune he was humming was from some Japanese game’s BGM, breaking his image.
“Ahh, not a cloud in the sky, unlike rainy London.”
He spoke in accentless Queen’s English, proof of how he was raised peaking through even in his carefree voice.
The man looked up at the night sky and breathed in the foreign country’s air.
“It’s the rainy season here too, apparently the weather’s abnormal this year.”
The woman walking behind him added respectfully to his remark.
She looked like a maid or something. Not much skin was exposed, she was a beautiful woman wearing a British style apron dress. She was quiet and knowledgeable and endowed with an adult beauty.
“It matters not! We’re here now so why don’t we go and play in Tokyo?”
“Should you not contact Urushibara, Sir?”
The man nodded calmly at the graceful serving woman’s inquiry.
“Sir”.
The title given by a Knight to the Crown.
Sir Edward Lampard.
The leader of the main branch of the White Knight Order in Britain answered frankly.
“If we do, he’ll be here and noisy right away, right? Let’s do as we like for a while.”
“Then shall I prepare a hotel room in the city?”
“No, no, tonight is enough for Tokyo, we’ll work properly from tomorrow.”
Edward stood still and looked back at his loyal subordinate.
“Kept a secret from Urushibara?”
The beautiful maid like subordinate also stopped, and waited for her master’s words.
“Of course! However, if I were to really go out, we’d definitely be discovered, right? The secret would be meaningless, and we can’t have that. We Six Heads are like nuclear weapons, so if I was violent in this country, that itself would bring political intervention, we really don’t want an international incident.”
Edward fluently shifted to a dangerous topic, still with his cheery tone.
“So I’m ordering you to perform recon on their strength. Alright, Angela?”
He asked it of her as if it were a simple errand.
Her response to this unthinkable order was.
“Yes, my lord.”
The woman called Angela replied immediately.
Her mouth twisted.
It was a dangerous smile, a crack showed in her quiet, intellectual beauty, showing what lurked beneath.

Seeing a peak of his subordinate’s true personality, Edward nodded in satisfaction.
“Then let’s restore our spirits tonight! We’ll go all out.”
He put an arm around his beautiful subordinate’s waist and walked onwards.
“I prefer to drink it in slowly.”
Angela leaned into her strong master’s body.
The strange master and subordinate pair melted into the Japanese night.

Chapter 3 – The Highest Seat, as if to Seize the Clouds

Even though it was only just June, the weather had already flared up.
The concrete floor of the corridor from the school building to the first arena reflected the sunlight, the air above it shimmering as if it were wearing the heat.
Moroha was being beaten down by the heat as he walked along the path for the afternoon's practical lessons.
"Too hot…"
He croaked as if he were a crushed toad.
"Geez! Don't tell me even *you're* slacking, Moroha."
Satsuki scolded him, walking next to him in a dignified posture.
"It's fine, class hasn't started yet."
Moderation was the important thing. Always being switched on would actually be bad for efficiency, or so was Moroha's excuse.
"Lame! I want my Nii-sama to always be cool!"
She said, while using her hand to fan him.
"You beautiful person"
Thought Moroha as he basked in the cool breeze.
A pair of upperclassmen looked back at them and said.
"He's that Ancient Dragon-"
"Yeah, they're really intimate aren't they?"
Maybe they were a couple, as they linked arms as if to compete with them.
"Uehehe, I guess we look like lovers."
"You can be embarrassed, but quit it with the 'Uehehe'."
Moroha could only smile wryly.
Chatting like that, they stepped into the first arena.
Suddenly, a strong drowsiness assaulted them.
However, it was only for an instant, their drowsiness disappeared as if it were a lie.
All three of Akane Academy's arenas were in a different dimension thanks to a special Ancestral Art.
Like a dream world.
However much things inside were destroyed, they'd eventually return to normal, and even if someone were seriously wounded, if they left they would be fine, like waking from a nightmare. Just who could use it and what kind of Ancestral Art it was was kept private, but Akane Academy was the only place in the world that had these ideal training grounds.
Their earlier sleepiness was due to crossing the boundary between the dimensions, a physiological phenomenon.
It felt unpleasant to begin with, but in the two months since enrolment, they had grown used to it.

“Now, it’s joint training today, so let’s get fired up!”
Satsuki declared energetically, and even Moroha straightened again thanks to the air conditioning.
There were already most of four classes’ worth of students inside.
But about half of them were upperclassmen that they’d not seen before .This was a joint class between the first and second years, so both years’ classes 1 and 2 were gathered in the arena.
There was another person that they didn’t normally see in practical lessons either.
In the stands encircling the arena, waving with a small hand was no one but Maya.
“Is it my imagination, or is she waving at us?”
Satsuki’s sharp eyes caught it, and Moroha was startled.
While he was thinking of how to answer, Shizuno appeared like a ghost behind them and tattled.
“She’s waving at Moroha. They got to know each other *very* well yesterday.”
“Don’t imply things like that… We just got acquainted normally, you know?”
Moroha was already used to Shizuno appearing out of nowhere, but his face stiffened.
“Anyway, wasn’t it you that said ‘it may not be a bad thing for her to catch your eye and you look after her’?”
“That’s true, but I didn’t expect her to be going ‘look at me, look at me’ did I? Did something happen between you right after yesterday?”
She was sharp…
At Shizuno’s continued prodding, Moroha stiffened further.
“You’ve got me as a little sister, don’t you!?”
Satsuki suddenly jumped in.
“Getting on well with that little angel like girl, are you saying I’m not enough?”
“Sorry. I really don’t get what you’re angry about…”
“Did you go out and get a little sister, like going out and getting a mistress!?”
“What kind of fetish am I supposed to have…?”
Moroha recoiled and lost his thoughts.
If she found out that Maya was his room-mate now, there would be bloodshed. Satsuki had that kind of menacing look.
The small mercy was that Satsuki wasn’t as perceptive as Shizuno.
She didn’t have an inkling that their conversation yesterday was about Maya.
“…Would this be included in stupid girls being cute?”
Thought Moroha.
“I’ll forgive a hundred million affairs! I’m that tolerant! But no little sisters! I won’t accept any other little sister but me!”
“But affairs are fine…”

Shizuno interjected calmly from the side, but Satsuki was advancing on Moroha without even a glance to the side.
“Please, calm down Satsuki. Then think on your words and change them before you speak on reflex.”
“No, I won’t forgive this! It’s part of the dignity of my identity!”
Satsuki looked like she wouldn’t leave it, and Moroha was at a loss.
However, the heavens had not forsaken him.
“Right, everyone gather round.”
The chime for the start of class sounded, and the classes’ teacher’s ordered them to gather.
“Tch. A narrow escape, Moroha.”
Satsuki’s eyes were still narrowed, but thanks to her serious personality, she followed the order with a click of her tongue.
It really was a narrow escape. Moroha breathed in relief.
At the same time, he couldn’t help but turn a critical gaze and the little angel who was still waving innocently.
He was going to tell them about Maya being his room-mate, but it was a really delicate thing, so he had to choose the time carefully, it was a political problem he would have to take time to explain.
His head hurt.
As he was trudging to the gathered students, Shizuno spoke quietly, barely moving her mouth so only he could hear.
“I had something to investigate before I came here, so I was late. I happened to hear the boys talking about something, so I collected evidence.”
“Was it interesting?”
“Yes, very. Apparently you appeared in the canteen this morning with a blonde haired angel.”
Moroha sounded like he was about to cough blood.
“If you give me an honest explanation later, I won’t tell Ranjou-san for now.”
“…I swear, so give me a break.”
Shizuno’s mask-like expression made it so he couldn’t tell what she was thinking, so it was even more terrifying.
Moroha held his head as he joined the group in front of the teachers.
The four classes sat where they liked and paid attention to the teachers.
Moroha, Satsuki and Shizuno sat together and listened quietly.
“Today is mainly to teach all of the first years that for Saviour fights, ‘Offense is easy, defence is hard’.”
Leading the class was class 1-1’s teacher, Tanaka Tarou.
With black rimmed glasses and a side parting, he was a boring man in his forties.
It was odd for him to seem to disregard the other three teachers that had a dignity about them when his appearance didn’t stand out.

Well, it was possible that the chore had just been pushed off to the lowest ranked.
“The light techniques has a strong defensive skill called Sun, and the dark arts have Ether Barrier. However, they’re normally hard to use. On the other hand light technique’s Diamond Skin Link and the various Wards of the dark arts are easy to use, but lack in defensive power. It’s easy to use the attack skills of both and make them strong, harsh and pile them on, but they don’t even compare.”
It was strangely similar to Earth’s warfare.
Even though plate armour was made to protect against swords, it was powerless in front of a bullet. Tank armour’s evolution had all but stopped, yet the destructive power of missiles and cannons showed no signs of slowing progress.
It was relatively easy to make destructive energy, but the reverse was almost impossible.
“Further, Metaphysical’s attacks are stronger than ours. Using a defensive technique is a last resort, for when you want to reduce the damage by even a little. Rather, the most efficient technique is to counter their attacks with our own. This is somewhat troublesome for the Black Mages. A step one dark art, Flare will easily counter a chilling attack, but is bad against water. However, the step two Blaze is good against both chilling and water-“
“Sensei!”
“Yes, go ahead with your question, Ranjou-san.”
“”If it’s hard to guard, wouldn’t you be better off just dodging?”
Her diligence and desire to show off combining, Satsuki shot up.
“A good solution. There’s no mistaking that’s the best defensive technique. However, that’s hard for Black Mages and even for you White Irons, if it was a wide area fire breath attack for example, avoiding it is difficult, right?”
Tanaka gently rebuked her and she sat down in dejection.
The reason there was no mocking atmosphere was probably because many of the first years were also thinking the same thing, and the same had happened to the second years the previous year.
“Well, if the practical class was just a lecture it would be boring. Let’s have someone act as an example.”
Tanaka looked over the arrayed students.
At that moment, a high-handed male voice came from the stands.
“If you need an example, use Haimura-kun, Tanaka-sensei.”
That proclamation roused the students.
Moroha was taken aback too after being suddenly put forward and looked towards the voice.
A man he’d not seen before was sitting in the stands with his legs crossed self-importantly.
He looked sharp and capable, but also highly strung and skinny. He looked around twenty five.

He'd sat right by where Maya was and she'd fled the arena.
"Nii-san…"
Shizuno gasped as she saw the man.
Moroha thought.
"So that's him, Akane Academy's chairman."
As he gave him a fleeting appraisal.
"Sir Edward will be coming for an inspection soon. He's expressed an interest regarding Haimura-kun. He may be inspecting us at any moment, so make Haimura-kun be the focus of class for a while."
Seeming to not know the situation, he continued to instruct the teachers from the stands.
An arrogant, disagreeable man.
He gave the worst impression, Moroha could hardly believe he was Shizuno's brother.
That came to mind before he wondered why he'd caught the English branch's head's eye.
"I thank you for the suggestion, but although you may be the chairman, I won't have you interjecting about how the class is run. Leave that to those teaching it."
Tanaka refused outright. He appeared inferior but didn't hesitate at all against an influential person.
He suddenly moved and nonchalantly shielded Moroha's back from the chairman's gaze.
"You may have been entrusted with the academy's administration, but this school, we teachers and most of all the students are not your personal property."
"Hmph, preaching. Both you and the principal, why are saviours so impudent I wonder."
"Likewise, please remember your own place, chairman."
A scorching tension seemed to appear between Tanaka and the chairman.
The students looked at each other uneasily.
Somehow the mood had changed to something that didn't belong in a class.
Reluctantly, after looking at his surroundings, Moroha spoke.
"Sensei, if it's just being an example, I'll do it."
Easily raising his hand.
"Wah, that's my Nii-sama, better and cooler than the second years."
Satsuki was thoughtlessly happy.
On the other hand, Shizuno looked at him as if blaming him.
Moroha had an ulterior motive. Going along with the chairman's intentions was unpleasant, but arguing over something so petty was a waste of time.
They were in the middle of class and it would be a bother for everyone.
It felt awkward having Tanaka protect him for something so slight.
"If you're willing to, then please."
Moroha shook his head at an apologetic Tanaka.
He stood and sent a sharp glance at the satisfied chairman.

As he stood in front of everyone, the boys were churning with jealousy asking why it was always him, and the girls let out high pitched cheers.
Among those polarised reactions.
“Screw off, Haimura! I’m not letting you have all the limelight!”
One person spoke with a voice louder than the others, baring a sense of rivalry at Moroha.
“Right, Tana-T, you were going to call for me next.”
The second year student who had jauntily stood up suddenly struck a pose like a Nio statue.
That alone made the first years recoil and the second years smile bitterly.
Moroha shrugged his shoulders, but couldn’t hide his smile.
However he was interpreting the strange atmosphere, it was as if the boy was drunk on the jealous gazes.
His name was Mannendou Kamekichi.
“First years! Call me Kamii, with love and respect!”
As he proclaimed this, still in his original pose, many of the first years were resisting the urge to burst into laughter.
“It’s a bother, Mannendou-kun.”
Ignoring Kamekichi’s nonsense, Tanaka gave his honest opinion.
“I was going to use Anti-Magic Link so I was going to have Haimura-kun use a mild first step dark art.”
As if he were used to being ignored, he didn’t pay any notice to not being called by his nickname.
“Then, I can mildly attack Haimura, Tana-T. Brace yourself!”
However, he just arbitrarily took control of the class.
“Everyone’s heart will burn with my wonderful Flare.”
He struck another original pose with his legs apart, his crotch thrust forwards and his right hand put behind his back and then through his legs, beckoning.
A murmuring spread throughout the first years.
They weren’t quite wondering why an eccentric like him wasn’t picked out.
They were lamenting at the gods’ unfairness that he was a member of the glorious Strikers.
The C rank shining on Kamekichi’s nametag was no illusion.
He’d worked hard to learn how to moon walk but it was futile and pointless.
Moreover, he was demonstrating his special skill to everyone, but it wasn’t related to being a Saviour.
“That alright, Haimura!? Are you gonna run!? Are you scared of my dark arts, Haimura!?”
“Yeah, yeah, I get it.”
Moroha shrugged his shoulders and took it, pretending to not hear Satsuki protest from behind him.
“Moroha won’t run from the likes of you!”
“Are you sure, Haimura-kun? If you can’t completely reduce the heat, it will hurt.”

One of the teachers kindly advised him to not.
Well, for exactly that reason, Tanaka was saying to do it.
“If you don’t listen to him, he gets noisy.”
To Moroha, Kamekichi was one of only thirteen strikers, and someone he trained with daily. He was already used to his selfish behaviour.
He shook his head at an increasingly apologetic Tanaka.
Tanaka turned to the students.
“Yes, I should explain for the first year students, Anti-Magic Link is an application of the Diamond Skin Link light technique to resist mana and satana. Depending on the user’s prana, it doesn’t reduce the damage by much, I want you to learn it as something to instinctively use against unavoidable mana and satana attacks.”
In front of his important lecture, Kamekichi was moon walking backwards and forwards.
He didn’t understand the odd act, but it was still really annoying.
The dumbfounded students moved away from them and Moroha and Kamekichi faced each other.
“I’ve got something to say first, Moroha!”
Kamekichi took a pose facing away from him and bending over backwards.
“I hate you!”
“Yes, I know.”
“Frankly speaking, I’m the best Saviour in the second year. The absolute best. But last year, they didn’t call me a super rookie or anything, fuck!”
“You said so yesterday.”
“So I hate you! I’m jealous! Picking on you is my greatest reason to live! If it let me harass you, I’d even sell my soul to the devil!”
“You said that yesterday too. Hell, you’re at it every day, aren’t you bored of it?”
“I’m the one that’ll stand out the most in front of Sir Edward! Don’t expect me to go easy on you just because we’re comrades in the Strikers!”
“I thought you would and completely fell into your trap-“
As Moroha smiled wryly, Tanaka cut in.
“Ah, Mannendou-kun, we’re limited for time, so could you start now?”
“Very well! I’ll show you my light speed spelling. Everyone, watch and learn.”
Was the clink sound effect from by the students their imagination?
Moroha burst into laughter, but still composedly coated his body in white prana.
Invoking Anti-Magic Link, a technique none of the first years could do yet so naturally it was even an example to the second years.
Almost unintentionally showing a rank C’s true power.
Kamekichi raised his mana and his finger raced through the air, tracing ancient magic characters in the empty air.
Still with his back to Moroha, he hid the writing.
He traced a phrase, this completed the step one dark art, Flare.

However, he secretly added another line.
It became the step two art, Blaze, its power more than doubled.
He also mumbled the incantation in his mouth so Moroha couldn't hear it.
Even though he was a show off and flamboyant, he was sly.
"Ah, no, Mannendou-kun. I told you a step one art."
When Tanaka noticed, his dark art was already in action.
"He hi hi hi hi! Burn nicellllly!"
He let the Blaze go over his shoulder and it burnt brightly as it assailed Moroha.
It fell on him like a pack of wild dogs, engulfing him in violently throbbing flames.
He might be an undisguised idiot, but his power's the real thing!
The students held their breath and watched because of the force of the dark arts created flames.
The focus of their attention was Moroha, wrapped in scarlet flames… Ahh, what a scene! Thanks to Anti-Magic Link, Moroha was standing there coolly!!
"Sensei!"
"Yes, go ahead with your question, Ranjou-san."
"You said Anti-Magic Link couldn't completely defend, but Moroha looks like he had an easy win."
"Indeed. It appears that Haimura-kun's prana is much stronger than Mannendou-kun's mana. It's not particularly suitable for what I wanted to show you as an example."
At being essentially called a small fry by Tanaka, Kamekichi was shocked.
"Huge NOOOOOOOOO!"
He fell to his knees and held his head in sorrow.
Stifled chuckling came from the students.
"Oi, Haimura! Couldn't you have burnt and suffered a little!?"
"Eh? Why?"
"My honour as an upperclassman is completely ruined!? The underclassmen'll call me a tiny upperclassman! What colour is your blood!?"
Kamekichi shouted energetically, but his face was using all of its mimetic muscles as he prostrated himself, it was pitiful.
His miserable supplication made Moroha feel sorry.
"Wah, it's hot. So hot, that's Kamii-senpai alright. If it's this hot again, what will I do this summer?"
"Gu ha ha ha ha! That's right, cry! Suffer! Your suffering is like honey to me!"
Moroha's acting pushed on his chest and he leapt into the air, his attitude doing a complete about-face.
He laughed triumphantly.
It was almost a comedy show, and the students were engulfed in laughter.

Mistaking it for praise, Kamekichi made an original hand sign (his thumb, middle and ring fingers extended) and the students finally couldn't take it and rolled around clutching their stomachs.
Some people even laughed so much they couldn't breath and the flames created by mana burnt out by themselves.
"By the way, Sensei. If we're demonstrating techniques, I think it might be a good idea to show offsetting an attack with another."
Moroha, who just an instant ago was supposed to be suffering, nonchalantly suggested that to Tanaka.
"That's a bad expression!?"
Kamii-senpai's hysteric voice *wasn't audible*.
"Oh, that's true. Then, Mannendou-kun please take up the challenge."
Tanaka supported it.
Moroha would use an offensive dark art and Kamekichi would use a dark art to offset it.
"Geh! T-that's not right, Tana-T. I used Flare first so Haimura-san should be gentle too, right! Gentle like one of those presenters on NHK, as an example to everyone-"
"Don't be so cold, help your underclassmen, se-n-pa-i."
"Shut up, Moroha! Who'd fall for that wheedling, idiot!"
"Ah, or could it be that you're scared of me, an underclassman?"
"Fu fu, come at me with a Flare or a Blaze!"
Kamii-senpai, a man among men among men.
Getting permission, Moroha spun a dark art with a mischievous face.
"Trace."
There exists purgatory in the underworld, and fields of fire in the corporeal world.
Fire discriminates not against good nor evil nor chaos as it burns and purifies all with a ferocious mercy.
All people die and return to dust, now, let the rites of cremation begin.
Moroha chanted Incinerate, its strength was on par with the third year students, the attack that knocked out Isurugi's younger brother in one shot.
"A step three has got to be against the rules, Haimuraaaa!"
Kamekichi couldn't spell as fast or as accurately and had tears and snot running down his face.
"Eh, you're pretending to have poor writing, thank you for your kindness."
"'m sorry! I apologise, so please fo'give mee!"
Kamii-senpai prostrated himself enough to refresh Moroha as he begged forgiveness.
The loudest laugh of the day reached the arena's ceiling.
Moroha laughed without care as he cancelled the Incinerate right on the verge of completion.
"Ahh, that was fun, that was fun."
He returned next to Satsuki and Shizuno to grand applause.

“Serves him right! He was always looking at Moroha as a rival, that’s what you get.”
Satsuki glared down her nose at Kamekichi, who, as his name being written with the character for turtle would suggest, was curled up and shaking.
“Hm? I don’t hate Kamii-senpai you know?”
Because he was an amusing person.
“I can’t believe it! What’s good about an annoyance like him?”
“I agree.”
Satsuki and Shizuno looked like it was completely unexpected.
Moroha put his hand to his mouth and thought. He’d say Kamii-senpai was someone who had a lot of male friends, but was received badly by girls.
Maybe there was a gulf deeper than the Mariana Trench between ‘A guy that guys liked’ and ‘A guy that girls liked’.
“Actually, Kamii-senpai’s pretty great.”
Moroha glanced at Kamekichi.
He was still shaking and cowering, arguing with his friends.
“Gya ha ha ha ha, you’re so lame Kamii.”
“Shut up. You try going against Haimura then. He’s way too scary.”
“Then don’t pick fights, so lame.”
Seeing this, all the students smiled brightly.
No one was paying attention to the chairman looking let down in the stands.
Thanks to Kamii-senpai being the life of the room, the glass went peacefully.
Moroha had dared to join with Kamii-senpai’s spirits and his little skit was effective. To borrow Satsuki’s phrase, “That’s what you get, chairman.”
He glanced at the chairman’s highly strung, unhappy expression before turning back to class.
“So, first and second years pair up. First years, use whatever attack you want and second years devote yourself to defence. Take advantage of working with a more skilled partner, first years, learn what it feels like to attack. Second years, you should be able to handle a first year’s attack.”
Precisely because attacking was easy and defending was hard, even though they were in different years, there was a struggle to win between them.
That was the aim of today’s joint training.
Moroha waved to Satsuki and Shizuno and searched for an upperclassman to pair with.
The chairman’s reproachful gaze bore into him through all of this, but he didn’t pay it any mind.

The practical class finished ‘without incident’ and as Moroha left the changing rooms after changing back into his school uniform, he found his path blocked by the chairman.

“That wasn’t particularly admirable in class earlier. If you’re a saviour, you should hold your head high and take your training more seriously. That kind of laughable performance in front of Sir Edward will be an issue, you know?”
What’s me, he started lecturing as soon as he saw Moroha.
Moroha had had a feeling that this would happen.
“I’m not that great a person, so I’ve nothing to really hold my head high over.”
He answered curtly, scratching his head.
It was a rebellious attitude, even if he was a big shot, Moroha didn’t have any courtesy or anything for a disagreeable person like him.
He was sure the chairman would find fault with that impudence too, but.
“Ah, excuse me. I didn’t come here to lecture you.”
He calmly gave an apology that seemed completely insincere and continued.
“I wanted to invite you to my home. Do you have time today?”
“Me? This is sudden.”
“I told Shizuno to before, but she hasn’t invited you at all. Well, she always was a late bloomer, it’s how her mother raised her.”
There was room for argument calling Shizuno a late bloomer, but Moroha dared to raise an objection.
“I’m honoured to be invited, but I have Home Room and after school training after this.”
“I obtained permission from Tanaka-sensei and Isurugi-kun.”
In that case, Moroha had no objections.
He also had his promise to give Shizuno ‘an honest explanation later’.
And above all, he was extremely curious what kind of place Shizuno’s house was.
“I promised to go back with someone, mind if I mail them that I won’t be?”
“Of course not. There’s a car waiting over there, you can do it inside.”
Following behind a swaggering chairman, Moroha headed to the teachers’ exclusive car park.
A limousine was literally waiting for the two of them with the engine on.
He sat in the back seats in the wake of the chairman.
The seat perfectly cushioned and supported Moroha’s body and felt as if it didn’t even exist as the car glided away. Whether it was due to the quality of the car, or the skill of the driver, the acceleration was unnoticeable.
“I thought Shizuno’s family was kind rich, but…”
A luxury car, with a chauffeur was proof they were the real thing.
Moroha’s ‘waste alert’ began sounding and shaking in the red zone.
Incoherent thoughts like ‘Wouldn’t a normal car be fine?’ or ‘I’ll just walk, it’s good for my health.’ or ‘Did you have to use a chauffeur?’ or ‘But you should encourage employment.’ or ‘Then is a luxury car good for your image?’ swirled around his head.
Moroha fell into a panic at the difference between him and a real rich person.

“Don’t you need to send a message?”
“Ah, yes. I apologise for my destitution.”
“?”
Moroha returned to his senses at the chairman’s words and took out his phone, not noticing his puzzlement.
Tell Maya he’d be late, and done.
“Haimura-kun, are you close with many people?”
As Moroha was looking at his phone, the chairman spoke.
“I’m not sure if it counts as many, but to a certain extent.”
With Satsuki and Shizuno’s faces first coming to mind, Moroha answered.
“Hmm…”
The chairman faced forwards and seemed to fall into thought.
He seemed somewhat dissatisfied.
“Is there something wrong with me having many friends?”
“Shizuno hasn’t been able to make many friends, but she has someone to entrust her heart to in you. Precisely because it’s a rarity I wanted you to be closest to her, as a brother.”
“Closest, you say…”
Just from his words, you might think he worried too much over his sister, a charming selfishness.
However, hidden in the depths of his heart, Moroha had a suspicious feeling.
It didn’t sound like it was grounded on love of his sister at all to Moroha.
“I treasure her.”
Moroha answered bluntly.
“Even if I didn’t tell anyone, you’d have some kind of plan, right.”
He added mentally.
Even so, the chairman relaxed, and still facing forwards, leant back into his seat.
There was no other topic, no other conversation, but even still, the car reached Shizuno’s house ‘without incident’.
Shizuno had no interest in a boring after-school training without Moroha or anything.
She received a message from her brother saying ‘As soon as home room is over, hurry home.’ And was on the road home.
Satsuki would surely be noisy and ask why she was skipping if she saw her, so she was being sneaky.
At Akane Academy, all students lived in dorms, so the students going home split into two paths.
The one leading to the boys’ dorms, and the one leading to the girls’ dorms, but Shizuno pretended to not see them and walked.
Because, by the orders of her family, Shizuno didn’t live in the dorms and commuted from her brother’s house.
It was a mansion that her brother, the first chairman, had built atop a small hill.

It was a quiet place, isolated from the noise of the city.
So the wide, beautiful garden somehow seemed to not breathe, and the luxurious western house looked like a grave.
Opening the double doors and stepping into the entrance hall, a member of the staff was waiting.
“Haimura-sama is waiting in the dining room. The master says that you should also quickly change and join them, Shizuno-sama.”
She wasn’t surprised Moroha had came.
Missing after school training wasn’t like him, and there was her brother’s message.
It was easy to connect them.
Shizuno briefly went to her room, shed her school clothes and stood thinking in front of her wardrobe.
She’d actually never shown Moroha her own clothes.
She didn’t actually own a single piece of cheap clothing, and she worried that he’d condemn it as a waste if he found out.
While worrying about things a little different from a normal maiden’s worries was completely lost on what to wear in front of the man she liked.
She fiddled with a stray strand of hair as she thought.
In the end, she chose the cheapest clothes.
“I wonder if this could be called appealing to his tastes…?”
If she could, she wanted to show him her prettiest clothes. But she was scared and lost her nerve.
It was a plain black silk dress. The skirt of it was arrayed with frills that negated the middle-aged woman impression it gave. Looking at everything in front of the mirror, it was definitely lacking, but needs must when the devil drives.
She looked good to begin with, so she actually wore it well, but Shizuno was a girl in puberty, so she didn’t have that much confidence in herself as she headed to the dining room while letting out a sigh.
It was a small room for close family.
Moroha and her brother sat opposite each other at the four seated table.
“Y-yo, Shizuno, we were waiting for you.”
Said Moroha timidly. It had a hint of him saying that it felt like an eternity waiting for her to come and save him.
He was tense and nervous.
Even Shizuno hadn’t been able to predict it and she blinked several times.
Sitting stiffly in the chair, Moroha was wearing a tuxedo.
His hair was carefully combed down too, he seemed much manlier.
She was entranced for a short while.

“Is this your plan, Nii-san?”
“Tatemura did it.”
He casually named the butler.
“In other words, yes it was.”
It was a roundabout play on words, but Shizuno felt no irritation. Thanks to it, she was given a feast for the eyes.
“You can laugh if you want to, you… know?”
But, being coerced into formalwear he wasn’t used to wearing, Moroha felt it was beyond his means, so took the initiative and gave a self-mocking smile.
“It suits you. It’s nothing to be embarrassed about, Moroha.”
“Don’ say that so seriously.”
Shizuno only had her normal mask-like expression, but Moroha overreacted. Whether it was his natural personality, even if Shizuno teased him (sexually) he annoyingly didn’t get too flustered, for him to be this panicked was a fresh experience.
“I’m sorry I’m having fun on my own, Ranjou-san.”
Shizuno apologised mentally. Just apologising didn’t really do much though. As she had her fill of Moroha’s manly formalwear and his juxtaposed huddled posture.
“That suits you too, Shizuno. It’s the first time I’ve seen you in your own clothes too.”
He launched a counterattack.
What a hateful man!
Even though he was surely full of nerves, he praised her as if it were a matter of course.
“That’s true. Thank you.”
Shizuno moved to the seat diagonally from Moroha with her composed, mask-like face and pulled the seat out next to her brother.
She misjudged her strength and the chair legs clattered across the floor.
“You’re unusually careless, aren’t you?”
Her brother found fault in that.
Perhaps even she were nervous, but even Shizuno couldn’t say.
Shizuno’s arrival, strangely put Moroha at ease.
“As thanks for always taking care of my sister, eat as much as you wish.”
“Thank you for the food.”
As the chairman said so, Moroha conscientiously put his hands together and picked up the knife and fork.
His parents had run a restaurant before they died, though it may have been small, so table manners had been drilled into him to a certain extent. He never had an inkling that a day they would be useful would come.
“It’s specially prepared for you, so I’ll be happy for you to eat your fill.”
“Umm…”
However, the table was overflowing with such an amount of food that he was lost.

“We’re eating all this?”
However much Moroha was still growing, exercised his body every day and ate a lot, three people couldn’t eat this much.
“You can leave what you can’t eat.”
The chairman smiled as if he had just heard an amusing joke.
A vein pulsed on Moroha’s temple.
“What will you do with the leftovers? Will the staff eat it?”
“No, that would be an insult to their work.”
“Ah, that’s true. Sorry for my insensitivity.”
Then what does happen with the leftovers?
“Of course, it will all be thrown away.”
The vein pulsed twice.
There wasn’t any food in this world that could be wasted – just as Moroha was on the verge of anger, Shizuno interjected.
“Relax. We’ll put the leftovers in boxes and you can take it back. I’m sure everyone in the dorms will be glad, right?”
That was Shizuno-san! She understood how things worked!
Everyone would definitely be happy – as Moroha was on the verge of smiling, the chairman sneered.
“Don’t be foolish. We won’t make Haimura-kun do something so degrading.”
The vein pulsed three times.
If he hadn’t been older, and Moroha wasn’t there by his invitation, he’d have suggested they take it outside.
In that tense atmosphere, Shizuno sent the chairman a look as if to say “Onii-san, be quiet and leave this to me.”
He merely nodded placidly, saying it was a good suggestion.
It was obvious even to Moroha, and he could infer Shizuno’s desire to have it end properly, so calmed.
“Now, that pasta is best when it’s hot, so go ahead and eat.”
At Shizuno’s recommendation, the waiter to the side apportioned it to small plates.
He quickly began to eat.
It was pescatore – tomato pasta with seafood. It was made with fresh tomatoes rather than canned ones thanks to the unusually dry rainy season. They had a vivid, refreshing flavour, stiffened by the broken anchovies. It wasn’t just a salty taste, it had the depth of salt water. The mismatched flavours of the tomato and seafood were perfectly harmonised. There was tender, half raw, semi-transparent squid, splendid Manila clams that could be mistaken for common orient clams, and what of the glossy black-shelled mussels? They could only be thought of as enchanting, you could tell their freshness at a glance. The pasta was boiled to perfection. The elliptical pasta was linguine, as he bit through it he felt his teeth sink into it. The texture supported and enhanced the flavour of the sauce and seafood. Moroha indulged himself in them.

He’d feel guilty having extravagant food and didn’t have the disposition to distinguish the flavours, but today was fine. At any rate, it was already out, so if he didn’t eat and enjoy himself, that would be all the more a waste. So he unhesitatingly ate with relish.
Starting from Shizuno’s recommendation, he ate plates one after another. The day had been long and tiring, and he was hungry, so being able to satisfy himself with just delicious food was great fortune!
Unfortunately, he’d now had his fill of such extravagance that he had never had before.
“That was delicious.”
Moroha conscientiously put his hands together.
He’d ate and ate, eight people’s worth.
If he had this feeling of satisfaction engraved on his heart, he could fight on just dry crackers for the next year.
“If you wish, you may come over again whenever you wish.”
“Eh, I’d feel a little guilty doing that.”
“I said so earlier, but Shizuno has no friends, so I’d like you to get on well. I’m sure Shizuno would be happy for you to come as well, correct?”
The chairman turned the conversation towards her, and after a brief pause, she spoke.
“Yes, that’s right.”
She nodded with her mask-like expression, but that pause felt like it showed everything.
That she was happy he came, but there were circumstances that meant she wished he wouldn’t.
Moroha raised his alert level with a hum. That strange feeling in the car that the chairman wanted them to become close was no illusion.
The chairman smiled a business-like smile.
The waiters promptly swept away the leftovers and prepared the after meal coffee.
Because he was waiting for the end.
“I have something I’d like to talk to you about, if you’re agreeable, Haimura Moroha-kun?”
“And there it is.”
Finally the chairman broke the ice.
So because they’d thoroughly fed him, he’d listen to them.
Moroha mentally fastened his collar.
“I’m sure you know that all Saviours are divided by rank within the White Knight Order, correct? Then, perhaps you know that it is no exaggeration to say that the rank is a sign of an actual higher position?”
“More or less.”
Moroha half-heartedly answered the chairman’s vague conversation starter.
“It’s because it’s still a new organisation where position is based off merit. On the contrary, an incompetent person with connections or vested

interests can’t attain an unfair position. Even the rank acknowledgement is strictly performed.”
The majority of the school were rank D, with the meaning of ‘Disciple’.
Upon formal entry to the White Knight Order, or when the entry was approved, they’d become rank C, or ‘Common’.
This was also one of the requirements to enter the Strikers, and Moroha fell under this.
Saviours that excelled after coming to maturity would be rank B, or ‘Breaker’.
All the teachers at Akane Academy were this rank.
As proof of reaching a peerless height, there was rank A, or ‘Ace’.
The principal and Isurugi Jin fell under this rank. The fact that both of them, two of very few rank A Saviours within Japan were currently attached to the Academy showed how highly the Japanese branch valued it.
“And above that, is rank S, or ‘Special’.”
There were only six in the world, genuine Messiahs.
Phenomena in human form.
“Haimura-kun, do you know the one, simple condition to become a rank S?”
“No, I don’t.”
Moroha shook his head.
He remembered hearing about the existence of rank S a while ago. But the topic of ‘S’ didn’t come up in class or anything. It was something above the clouds. A rank that seemed like it didn’t even exist.
What would the condition be to reach that far to the heavens?
Somewhat hesitantly, Shizuno told him.
“To defeat a metaphysical that would be unbeatable one-on-one on their own-”
The chairman nodded and threw out his arm proudly.
“In other words, you!”
He loudly proclaimed.
“…”
Moroha didn’t say anything for a while, merely sharpening his eyes, remaining on guard.
Shizuno gave him a look saying that was the right decision.
Then faced the chairman in Moroha’s place.
“I don’t quite understand what you’re saying? Just when did Moroha defeat a Metaphysical alone?”
Objecting with a voice full of strain.
“Soon after entering school. Did he not gloriously slaughter that nine-headed hydra?”
The chairman spoke nonchalantly.
“The one that Moroha, Ranjou-san and I defeated together?”
Shizuno nonchalantly corrected him.
“Was there some kind of misunderstanding? Or was the principal’s report mistaken?”

Then she pressed the advantage further.
The chairman relaxedly shook his head.
And then.
“I haven’t misunderstood. I too heard that it was defeated by three people in reality.”
“Then-”
“Then, all Haimura-kun has to do is follow along with the lie that he defeated it alone.”
The chairman made an astounding suggestion with a nonchalant face.
“There were only three people there, right? So if you and Ranjou-san get your stories straight, it’s the perfect crime, no? That alone will make Haimura-kun number 2 in Japan.”
He was instigating Moroha to do something astounding.
Shizuno realised.
“That’s what you were scheming, Nii-san!”
Her voice was rarely, ever so rarely rough.
Forgoing her calm, so stood up.
“Scheming is bad for my reputation. With a slight lie, Haimura-kun will attain a position within the heavens, and acquire the influence of a new rank S within the Japanese branch, isn’t it wonderful? Haimura-kun won’t have to worry about anything. I’ll become his guardian and deal with all the trifling matters.”
“And you’ll borrow the authority that comes with his new rank…”
Still with his nonchalant face, the chairman made no move to deny it.
Finally, as if entreating him, Shizuno spoke.
“Don’t be absurd, Nii-san. If Moroha becomes a rank S, he’ll be sent to battlefield after battlefield.”
“Of course. All the Order’s expectations and pressure is on the rank S Saviours.”
“And what will happen to Moroha…”
“He’ll earn merits of war doing so, a fine deal is it not.”
“However good Moroha is, that won’t end safely! And other than that-”
Shizuno argued vehemently.
But the chairman smoothly raised a hand, stopping her.
“That’s enough. It’s the family’s decision.”
As if sealing any further objections, he rebuked her with a cold expression.
Perhaps due to Moroha’s presence, only his tone was gentle.
Shizuno shut her mouth, and couldn’t complain any more, as if she had a spell put on her.
“…I understand.”
Her complexion was almost that of a lifeless doll as she dejectedly sat down.
The chairman nodded in satisfaction and once again faced Moroha.
“So that’s how it is, Haimura-kun, by just going along with a single lie, you can become a rank S.”

Moroha looked at his cold smile, and his near unsmiling eyes and casually scratched his head.
It was somewhat unfair to Shizuno as she earnestly exhausted her words, but he'd actually found it strange.
They're really lied in the report to the principal that the Metaphysical that Moroha defeated alone was defeated by the three of them. And yet now the chairman was inciting him to 'lie' and say he defeated it alone.
He felt like bursting into laughter at the irony.
"I'm sorry, I'm not inclined to lie."
Moroha bluntly answered that he didn't do it alone.
With a deadly serious face.
"You… you can become number two in Japan you know? Don't you want that?"
The chairman asked, deeply surprised.
"I'm not that great a person."
He didn't want status or influence beyond his means, and he didn't at all want to go along with what seemed to reek of letting the chairman use that status and influence.
Shizuno, while she couldn't react much under her brother's supervision, breathed a sigh of relief.
"I can't believe it…"
The chairman looked at him as if he were a rare animal, and as if he thought something like 'No, he surely just doesn't truly understand how wonderful it would be.' He slowly shook his head and stood.
"I apologise, but I still have duties to attend to so I must leave you here. Listen, Shizuno, make sure to thoroughly explain to Haimura-kun the advantages of becoming a rank S."
They had hoped the chairman had given up, but he was stubborn until the end.
"I understand, Nii-san."
Shizuno assented.
Completely concealing her inner emotions, with her mask-like expression.
From a type of mutual trust, Moroha could tell that Shizuno was only pretending to accept on the surface.
However, it fooled the chairman.
"I get the idea I know why Shizuno's so good at hiding her expression…"
Having such a high-handed, oppressive senior in your family with probably train that.
It wasn't fortunate at all for Shizuno though.
Moroha sympathised mentally and the chairman left behind a few words.
"Tomorrow is a holiday, so please stay the night. I've informed the staff."
"No, there's someone waiting for me to return, so I can't really."
If Maya hadn't been there, he would have been glad to though.
"Waiting for you? At the dorms?"

He found it strange, but Moroha didn’t feel the need to mention Maya’s name.
Shizuno was curious too, but to avoid misunderstanding, and because the explanation was serious, he wanted to postpone it.
“Then, at least relax for a while.”
“Thank you.”
Moroha smiled and thanked the chairman.
He’d wanted to be alone with Shizuno.
So he’d take full advantage of those words.

He was invited to Shizuno’s room, it was a somewhat chilly scene.
It was spacious, and filled with expensive furniture and things, and there was no sense of lacking.
But, that was all. The room didn’t offer a single insight into what kind of person the occupant was.
Moroha was a little shocked, and Shizuno noticed this.
“It’s because I didn’t choose or buy a single thing here. Besides, those of the Urushibara family aren’t permitted their own interests.”
Shizuno explained, her voice sounding somewhat lonely.
He understood, it was because there weren’t any *personal* things that it felt chilly.
Moroha didn’t have many personal things because he was poor, but Shizuno’s room was only filled with *things*, so it couldn’t help but feel lonely.
“But now, I have an interest in sleeping.”
Shizuno caressed the support of her four poster bed.
That was true, even in class, if there was a chance, she’d doze off.
“Neither my family or my brother can interfere then; and my dreams are filled with happiness.”
She was sorrowfully saying that watching memories of her past life was better than the waking world.
“Ah, of course, it’s different when I’m with you, you know? I’ve never dozed off in front of you, have I?”
“You’ve pretended to sleep and teased me too many times to count though.”
Even Moroha’s annoyed words dulled.
“It’s getting depressing, so let’s go out into the night air.”
Shizuno stepped onto the balcony and beckoned.
Moroha stood next to her and looked at the night skyline from the second floor.
It was isolated from the lights of the town, so the deathly quiet mountain vista was easily visible.
The mansion Shizuno lived in was atop that small mountain.

“It seems like a stiff family.”
Moroha gave his frank impressions.
If he spoke on it too much, he’d grow melancholy, so he kept it short.
“But, school is fun, you know?”
Shizuno looked steadily at Moroha.
Enough to make him awkward. For some time.
He didn’t speak a single word asking why.
He had no choice but to look away to the quiet mountain scene while scratching his head again.
The scenery from here wasn’t particularly pleasant, but the night breeze was comforting.
Because it was on top of a mountain, it wasn’t hot or humid, and it cooled their bodies that were still flush with food.
This alone was a relief.
“Hey, Moroha…”
Shizuno laid her hands on the railing and spoke, looking towards the boys’ dorms.
Moroha looked that way too in the same position and waited for her to talk.
She softly opened her mouth.
“Would you explain what happened yesterday with Maya?”
Moroha looked like he’d slip from the railing.
“I won’t let you leave until you do, you know?”
“I’m not going to hide it. I’m just thinking how to explain it so you don’t misunderstand.”
“Why don’t you just tell me exactly as it is, from start to finish?”
Small dimples appeared at the sides of her mouth.
“I’m a quiet girl unlike Ranjou-san, so I won’t suddenly get angry while you’re explaining.”
Without a doubt, if it had been Satsuki, there would have been bloodshed, so Moroha was amused.
“Got it.”
Shizuno would listen properly, with that belief, Moroha explained in minute detail, without hiding anything how Maya came to be his room-mate.
With appropriate sounds of agreement, Shizuno listened until he was finished.
“Well, I thought it was something like that.”
Then, she just shrugged her shoulders, and, with no cries of ‘lolicon!’ looked at him with eyes that seemed to see through everything.
“But I’m happy to hear it honestly from you.”
She said gently.
Moroha was relieved.
“You always seem to be trying to keep Satsuki away from me, so I was sure you’d be annoyed at Maaya.”

“It’s true that I can’t help but enjoy teasing Ranjou-san, but trying to keep her away is a misunderstanding, you know? If I did that, I wouldn’t be able to play with her, would I?”
She softly extended a hand and kept drawing a spiral on Moroha’s chest.
“If I was irritated every time you were kind to another girl, I wouldn’t be able to be with you.”
She murmured in a somewhat reproachful voice.
“R-really? It’d be nice is Satsuki understood that though, ha ha ha.”
Shizuno had suddenly brought about an alluring mood, Moroha tried to distract her with a dry laugh as he floundered.
“Yet she says things like ‘you can’t have any other sister than me!’ She really doesn’t get it, ha ha ha.”
“Oh? I think Satsuki-san knows you *very* well too.”
“Eh, how so?”
“She said she’d allow affairs. If she got angry at each one, she wouldn’t be able to be with you, would she?”
“I-I don’t get that either. Besides, there shouldn’t be an affair between siblings anyway.”
“Well, say as you like.”
Shizuno shrugged her shoulders in exasperation.
“In any case, it’s fine for you to be affectionate with Maya-san. Anyway, even if I said not to, you wouldn’t listen, that’s your personality.”
“Just how much have you seen through me?”
Moroha hid his embarrassment with complaints.
“I wonder… If, for example, you came across a poor, young slave girl one day-”
“Wait. Where are there going to be slaves nowadays?”
This was a country without a caste system.
“I said it was an example, didn’t I? You surely wouldn’t just leave that girl. You’d free her, and take in that girl with no relatives, and properly raise her until she’s a lady. Absolutely. In a previous life, in this life, you’re that kind of person.”
As if it weren’t even an example, Shizuno blandly went through this incoherent rambling.
However.
A spark bloomed in Moroha’s head.
As Shizuno continued speaking, the spark grew gradually bigger and bigger.
Moroha’s head ached, he staggered and held his forehead.
“I know that well.”
As Shizuno seemed to finish, a crack appeared within a wall in the depths of his mind.
The spark suddenly sparked bigger.
And then, he heard voices, two.
“Don’t you have a duty of tying me down?”

“You are free. In this world, there exists no chain that can bind a person to another.”
A female and male voice. The first was the woman, the second the man.
It sounded like a serious conversation, like sweet whispers between lovers, they were maddeningly familiar voices.
Though he thought he heard them clearly, it felt like they were slipping between his fingers, and soon only a vague sensation remained. Only the familiarity remained.
However much he tried to gather it, it was impossible…
He staggered and leant against the balcony.
“What’s wrong all of a sudden?”
Shizuno’s voice after stopping her example was mixed with worry for Moroha.
“Shizuno… are you really not the Witch of the Underworld?”
In place of an answer, Moroha asked a question.
“Who knows? I don’t know what you’re talking about.”
Shizuno answered with a mask-like expression, not clearly playing dumb.
“More importantly, it’s cold.”
It certainly was cold. But was it Moroha’s imagination that she was bluntly changing the subject?
“Hey, it’s cold.”
Shizuno once again extended a hand and caressed Moroha’s chest.
“Shall we head inside?”
“No. It’s depressing, I want to feel the night air.”
Before Moroha could ask what they would do, she firmly attached her body to his.
A pleasant, indescribable scent rose from her hair.
Moroha scratched his head briefly but said.
“Is this just warming you?”
He prepared himself and held her in his arms.
“Are you happy?”
Shizuno held herself still closer.
With her younger sister like openness, Satsuki often embraced him.
Shizuno was a sexual harassment demon, but he unexpectedly couldn’t remember embracing her many times.
Embracing her glamourous body, her softness pervaded his senses.
Shizuno’s temperature had dropped and she was cold, so it made him want to warm her up and care for her. Despite that, embracing her tighter, he could gently feel the warmth hidden within her.
It was a mood that made it seem certain at least a kiss would be exchanged, however, just from warming each other, Moroha was amazingly satisfied.
Shizuno may not have been though.
Even if they were to live alone, in a castle of ice within an intense cold, if he had held Shizuno like this every day, he felt like he could have lived with hope.

For some reason, suddenly, that feeling came strongly to mind.

Chapter 4 – White Knight Assault

“Am I really that easily swayed…?”
Walking through the dark streets lined with houses, Moroha grumbled.
He was on his way back from Shizuno’s house.
In his left hand there were several containers with the leftovers from dinner in a bag he was carrying.
He was offered a car, but it was a waste so he politely declined.
Before he returned to the dorms, he wanted to cool down his body and mind that felt like they were still smouldering.
His entire body could still vaguely feel the faint warmth from Shizuno’s skin and her softness.
“I tell her not to lower her value as a girl, and then I go and lower it, what a hypocrite.”
Grumbling over his misdeeds, Moroha scratched his head.
While thinking that he’d keep hold of himself next time, he took out his phone.
The time was nine PM. He’d said he would be late, but Maya was still probably worried.
There was a message too.
Scattered with cute emoji, it read.
“You went off to play on your own without even waiting for a reply, I’m so sad.”
Moroha covered his face with a curse.
Should he have taken Maya? No, the chairman’s words weren’t really suitable for children. Yeah, logical argument complete.
“…Maybe I’ll buy some ice cream too.”
Though he’d finished, he fell back, mentally counting what was left in his light wallet.
Just as he was closing his phone, it began to ring.
Looking who it was, it was Kamii-senpai.
The Strikers had certainly exchanged phone numbers in case of emergency, but it was rare to get a phone call from him.
“Hello, what is it?”
Moroha answered the phone perplexedly.
“Oh, Haimura. Bring me some melon bread at Shibata Park right away.”
“Can I hang up?”
Moroha answered his upperclassman with no hesitation.
He didn’t get the weirdo’s thinking patterns. What was he suddenly talking about this time?
“Bastard! Listen to your senpai!”
“I can buy it, but I’ll charge you ten thousand yen for labour?”
“A ten k note for a melon bread!? You’re pushing your luck!”

“If you want to be a respected upperclassman, then do things worthy of respect.”
Moroha was bantering back and forth with a wry smile, but.
“H-how long, Kamii? Has he not picked up? Guaaah!”
He heard a somewhat distant scream through the phone and his expression changed.
“Has something happened, Senpai?”
He asked seriously, with a sharp voice.
“…Please, just come to Shibata Park without saying anything. My mates are in trouble.”
Kamekichi answered in a distressed voice.
“Got it, but I don’t know the place.”
Moroha took over immediately from the annoying upperclassman who couldn’t speak honestly.
“Can you see the sky? There’s fireworks coming from here.”
At Moroha’s answer to go ahead, he looked around the cloudless sky and saw Kamekichi’s Flare from the west.
“I’ll be there soon!”
Moroha hung up and ran at full speed.
His entire body was coated in white prana.
It was as if a star had appeared on Earth in the night.
And then, running with God Speed Link, he leapt onto a roof, and from there crossed onto another.
“Dance, dance, wings of the phoenix, as light as the fleeting sparks, I am unbound from the yoke of gravity.”
Then he decreased his weight to near nothing with the Dark Art, Decrease Weight, raising his agility to the limits.
He ran without a sound along the tiles and leapt into the air.
“Ah, what a waste!”
The vibrations and its weight meant that the food in the bag was ruined, but this wasn’t the time.
When he was being serious, the built up town was like a field to Moroha.
He arrived rapidly where Kamekichi was waiting.
It was a small park that had quietened in the dead of night. There were gouges taken out of the ground everywhere, and the metal jungle gym and swings had been melted into one.
And, hanging in the air was a high density or prana, mana, and a thirst for blood.
There was no mistaking it, it was after Saviours had fought.
“You came, Haimuraaaaa!”
Kamekichi cried out in delight.
Two male students were laid out next to him, unconscious.
He recognised them, they were both in the reserve corps of the Strikers.
Second years like Kamekichi.
Kamekichi was protecting them and facing off against an enemy.

“Sorry I kept you waiting…”
Moroha stood next to him and looked over ‘the enemy’.
It was a woman, wearing a racing helmet.
Even though you couldn’t see her face, you could tell by her figure. As she was wearing a close fitting bodysuit, her chest and backside drew out seductive rounded lines.
She was a well-endowed woman, but what drew Moroha’s eye most was the brightness of the prana surrounding her.
It was a light that glimmered sharply, hard like an emerald.
At a glance, he could tell she was strong.
It was only natural that Kamekichi and the reserves couldn’t match up with her.
“How did this happen?”
Without moving his gaze even slightly from the woman, he asked Kamekichi.
Being attacked by a Saviour that was this strong, or fighting in the middle of town, neither were common events.
“You see…”
With a nervous expression, Kamekichi began to speak impatiently.
“We were practicing a new special move every night in the park-”
“Please don’t use a park in the middle of town for training Ancestral Arts.”
“I-I don’t want to show people at school that I work hard.”
“It doesn’t matter, just get to the point.”
“Wha!? You’re commanding us now!?”
“I can just go, you know?”
“Anyway, that helmeted woman suddenly attacked and threatened us to call the strongest guy in school!”
“I wish you’d called Isurugi-senpai…”
“Don’t as so much! Isurugi-senpai’s way too scary to come crying to.”
“…And you’re not ashamed to rely on your underclassman?”
He understood the situation, but didn’t at all understand the circumstances.
The woman’s identity was still unclear, as was her objective.
There wasn’t a single clue.
“There’s no choice. Anyway, you run away, I’ll take over here.”
“D-d-d-d-d-d-don’t be stupid. I-I-I-I-I-I won’t leave my u-u-u-u-underclassman and run.”
Even though his voice was shaking so much it wasn’t even funny, Kamii-senpai pretended to be tough.
“Then go and get help. I don’t mind if it’s not the oh-so-scary Isurugi-senpai.”
“Got it! You can leave that to me!”
With an original gesture of slapping his backside rather than his chest, Kamii-senpai agreed.
“It’s not the arena, so don’t go overboard!”

Leaving behind those words, he shouldered both of his fallen friends and left, carrying the bag of food.
A Black Mage had normal physical abilities. They were probably heavy, and he was as slow as a turtle.
But Kamii-senpai couldn't abandon them.
"He really is the model of the Strikers."
He couldn't hate him.
While covering Kamii-senpai's retreat, Moroha gripped his ID Tag in his right hand.
"I don't know who you are, and I don't feel like asking what you're after. I've got senpai to give warning. If you want this to end peacefully, you won't attack, will you?"
He suddenly glared at the woman.
It was a coldly murderous glare that said if she intended to continue until the end, he'd show no mercy.
"…"
The woman didn't reply.
The quiet manifestation of her weapon was her answer.
It was two swords, connected at the pommels, a foreboding weapon.
Gripping the handle in the centre, she'd probably be able to swing the left and right blades freely, as if it were double-headed.
The woman didn't follow Kamii-senpai with even her gaze, it looked like she had no lingering regrets.
He didn't understand the circumstances, but it was a stance that showed she had no interest in anyone other than Moroha.
If she felt like that, he'd respond in kind.
Moroha didn't enjoy pointless conflict, but.
"I'm not so gentle as to let you get away with making sport of my respected upperclassman."
Moroha poured prana into the tag in his hand.
In his grip, a strong, white light shone.
"Come, Saratiga!"
The metal plate immediately responded, changing colour like red hot iron, stretching like toffee.
It formed a familiar grip, a refined pommel, and an uncouth steel blade.
It still didn't compare with the holy sword the Flaga wielded, but the steadily improving favoured sword was manifested.
Taking up their favoured weapons, that was the signal.
Moroha and the woman charged, and collided.
The first strike was Moroha's, the prana coated sword drawing out a bright white diagonal.
The woman blocked with the left blade.
Simultaneously, her movements flowing together, the opposite sword slashed upwards.

The blade, coated in the woman's prana, left a straight line of emerald green in the darkness.
Moroha back-stepped without a moment's delay and tried to dodge, but a line split open on the chest of his uniform.
What sharp prana!
He should have seen and dodged it, but just the wake of it was enough to cut.
"She really is strong… No worse than Isurugi-senpai."
From that single exchange, Moroha had a read on her strength.
It was a vivid reminder of the king of the monsters, extolled even among the Japanese branch, far beyond a student.
The decision was instant. Moroha took several more steps back and deliberately took some distance.
He changed his hold on the sword.
A single sword in the right hand, his right foot slightly forward, his chest forward in pride, it was a peculiar stance.
He looked widely as if to capture everything, not just one, as he awaited his opponent's move.
The woman slouched her stance forward slightly, and waved the right blade, as if in invitation.
He wouldn't fall for such a cheap provocation.
This fight, this opponent, was not something he could leave to chance.
Relying on force would be the end, he would be cut down without even a chance to regret.
That was right.
After learning Ancestral Arts for a mere two months, Moroha's battle sense was already at the level of a veteran.
Moroha's breath was shallow, sharp, he was drawn to the limit.
It was as if all of his cells had changed, and he was changed into a creature born for battle.
Perhaps the woman felt it, her sword tip twitched.
Truly, this woman wasn't normal either.
She changed stance as if straightening herself.
She held her double-headed sword horizontally, her feet equally spread about her centre of gravity, it was a symmetrical stance.
With a light sound, the double-headed sword separated into two.
The woman hefted one blade on both sides of her, her combat style changing.
"She's coming…"
Just as Moroha felt that presence, the woman sliced forwards.
It was a fierce attack, with no thought for defence.
Right sword. Left sword. Right sword. Left sword. Right, right, left, right, left, right, right, left, left, right, both together…!
It was a relentless consecutive attack with no room to breathe.
Moroha held them all off with one sword.

As if his right hand were a precision machine, without a single wasted movement, he blocked, turned them aside and parried.
The simultaneous attack from both sides, ending the combo, he evaded with a large leap backwards.
The woman wasn't going to let him escape and immediately pursued him.
As Moroha gained distance, she swung the sword without connecting, and the other sword again.
However, it brought forth a gale.
Two blades of wind, full of an emerald brilliance tore through the surface of the park as they rushed at Moroha.
That wind itself was already an attack.
Ancestral Arts, Light Technique, Jupiter.
It was a high class technique that Isurugi Jin favoured, nearly no one in the academy could use it, and this woman had the strength to send off two in succession!
"But, it's just a different level of skill than Isurugi-senpai."
Seeing a chance at victory, Moroha's eyes gleamed like a naked blade.
Pouring all of his prana into Saratiga, it was suddenly refined.
The blade shone like Sirius.
With that swing, the blade of wind that Moroha brought forth surged forward, carrying prana.
Against the woman's Jupiter, Moroha also attacked with Jupiter.
Offsetting? No, it was a counterattack.
The white wind that Moroha released bared its fangs, and ripped into the woman's green wind, eating it, swallowing it, and then, as if it wasn't enough, it beat against the woman.
While being beaten against by the destructive gale, full of Moroha's prana, the woman braced herself in that unbearable spot, protecting her body with Diamond Skin Link and frantically letting it pass.
Moroha had already leapt forward.
Completely different from his earlier, cautious approach, he was as ferocious as a wild animal.
Like the wind, like fire, when the time came to attack, he'd finish it in one fell swoop.
Slashing down from his shoulder, the sword left a trail of bright white, rending through the darkness of the night.
"Damn it."
The woman grit her teeth within her helmet.
She let out an English curse. However, focussed to the limits as he was, Moroha didn't hear her voice. It just stuck under his ears, in his subconscious.
"Raaah!"
The woman roared and met Moroha's attack with one of her own.
Managing to regain her footing while being borne down on by Moroha's Jupiter was impressive.

Narrowly blocking Moroha's attack with her right blade was impressive.
Simultaneously flowing into a thrust with her left blade was also impressive.
However, it was already too late.
While Moroha's right hand was slashing with his sword, his left was tracing ancient magic characters.
"Formless blade, invisible sword, come forth, Render!"
That, was the end.
Moroha released a gale made of mana from his left hand.
Evading the wide, violent gale from point blank was near impossible.
Against the instantaneous offensive Dark Art, offsetting it with a Jupiter Light Technique was also impossible.
The woman was probably highly experienced, skilled Saviour.
That was precisely why, at close range, in the speed of the world of close quarters combat, her body didn't react at all to the unthinkable sorcerous attack.
Taking the gale head on, she was jostled, and tears opened up all over her body suit, showing glimpses of an adult woman's glossy skin.
It was a step one Dark Art, Fracturing Gust.
Blown away, the woman rolled to outside the park.
As she hit the road, she lay, gasping in pain for a while on the asphalt.
Moroha watched her guardedly as she finally stood up using the sword and staggered off into the night.
Moroha silently let her go.
After all, he'd promised to let her go peacefully if she didn't attack from the start.

The next day.
It was a long awaited holiday for the students that only got one day off a week.
However, Satsuki had been cranky since the morning.
She was taking her stress out on a cat hug pillow on top of her bed in the dorms.
She'd bought it two months ago and named it 'Shizuno' and frequently tormented it.
"Stupid Nii-sama. Stupid stupid stupid. I don't care anymore, idiot."
The reason for her stress was Moroha yesterday.
She thought he'd suddenly disappeared before home room and their teacher Tanaka had said he left early.
She was really worried, but he'd gone home without saying a word.
Finally, she decided she'd talk to Shizuno after home room, but she'd vanished like a ghost too.
Putting all that together, even Satsuki knew what was going on.

They'd definitely gotten bored, and gone off to play, hand in hand.
All while Satsuki was being worked over by the demons at after school training.
Geez, it was so annoying!
"You could have at least said something! It would have been fine after if you apologised! Geez! Geez geez geez!"
She'd stayed up all night waiting, but her phone hadn't made a peep.
"You should just get married to Urushibara!"
Satsuki hit Shizuno with a roar and threw it against the wall.
She threw herself down on the bed with a huff and rolled around.
"Anyway, I don't really have anything to do, I guess I'll sulk in bed all day."
As she was sulking, her phone, sitting on her desk, suddenly started to ring.
It was Moroha's ringtone.
"Hmph, what do you want now? You didn't phone quickly, so I'll irritate you."
Because she herself was irritated, this was revenge.
She normally answered on the third ring, but she drew it out to the seventh as she sulked.
Now Moroha should be out of his mind with worry.
He should be thinking about how precious his little sister was.
That's what you get!
And then, to really drive the point home, she'd answer in as moody a voice as she could.
"Hello, Nii-sama♥"
"Hello? You're energetic this morning, Satsuki."
Moroha smiled lightly on the other end of the line.
Satsuki reflexively stared disbelievingly at the phone.
What was energetic about her voice?
Could it be that he'd heard a voice that had taken the bait, and was swishing its tail like a female dog? Absolutely unbelievable.
"You free today?"
"Nope."
"Hmm, that's annoying, I had something kind of complicated…"
"Eh, what a shame. But you know, I have lots of friends? The kind of people you can't get enough of? I can't be with my clingy Nii-sama all the time you know?"
"Guess not, my bad. Tomorrow at school is fine then, friends are important."
"Wait right theeeeere!"
Satsuki shouted with all her might when it looked like he'd hang up.
"That hurts to hear."
"As it should. You've got lots of things you need to reflect on."
"No, my ears physically hurt."
"I don't care." Satsuki didn't pay any attention to Moroha's complaints.
"So?"
"So, what?"

“What time are we meeting?”
“So you are free in the end…”
“Shut it, I think of my Nii-sama, so I’ll cancel everything else!”
“Right, right, I’m so happy to have such an ostentatious sister.”
“Lunch today is your treat, Nii-sama♥”
She could hear vehement objections from the phone, but she paid them no mind.
In a lifeless voice, as if possessed by the god of poverty, he mumbled where to meet.
With a ‘see you later’ she hung up and yelled.
“It’s a date!”
Leaping off her bed in joy.
She had to do her hair, skin and nails, choose her clothes, do something about the bags under her eyes, she had a lot to do.
She’d be cutting it fine.
Satsuki fired herself up with a roar.
Moroha had only really said he had something complicated to talk about, but that hadn’t stayed in Satsuki’s flower bed like brain at all.
The place was a coffee lounge close to the girls’ dorms.
The girls in the Strikers used it often, and taken both Satsuki and Moroha there many times. The price was a little straining from the point of view of a student, but the tea, deserts and light meals were all high level. It was a good place to have lunch after.
“I get a treat from Moroha for once♪”
Satsuki’s mood had completely recovered.
It featured a fairly big open terrace, but the sun was beating down today, so she went into the air-conditioned interior.
In a seat inside, Shizuno was elegantly sipping from a coffee cup.
Satsuki looked like she’d fall over face-first.
“Why are you here!?”
“Moroha called me?”
Shizuno answered nonchalantly, reading a magazine with a ‘what of it?’.
Satsuki’s excitement dropped like a stone.
“And I was so sure it was a date…”
“It’s different if he’s invited by us, but Moroha doesn’t have that much resourcefulness, does he?”
“That’s true. If he did, he’d be lovey-dovey with us.”
Satsuki sat down in disappointment.
The round table had four seats around it, she chose the one opposite Shizuno.
“Oh? He’s not lovey-dovey with you?”
“If you’re after a fight straight away, then I’ll buy in, Urushibara!?”
“Ten thousand yen, then.”
“Brr. People that take that kind of retort seriously are chilly.”

“Isn’t that better than heated people like you? I’d like to think of the temperature too.”
In the middle of Satsuki’s heated argument with Shizuno, the waiter calmly (a true pro) came and took Satsuki’s order of Darjeeling.
“Hey, were you with Moroha yesterday?”
Then with her cheek in her hand, she sullenly asked.
“Yes, he was invited to my house.”
Without looking up from her magazine, Shizuno smoothly answered.
“What did you do together?”
“Perverted things.”
“!?”
“It’s a joke. My brother and the staff were there, so we couldn’t do anything strange.”
Still with her eyes facing down onto the magazine, small dimples appeared at the sides of Shizuno’s mouth.
“Quit it with jokes that are bad for my heart.”
Satsuki spoke rudely as she stealthily calmed herself.
She didn’t have an inkling that they’d spent a long time embracing on the balcony.
“Speaking seriously, it wasn’t me that invited Moroha, it was my brother. It seems his strength caught his eye.”
“I thought so in class yesterday, but the chairman’s pretty discerning!”
Satsuki was happy as if it were about her.
“Aren’t you uneasy? Will you be fine if Moroha enters centre stage with the White Knight Order and has to go far away?”
“I’d wel-co-me it! Sooner or later, my Nii-sama will be that sort of person!”
Satsuki spoke, brimming with confidence, her face clear.
“And then, I’ll chase after him! I’ll always follow him! That’s why I’m training myself at this school. Fwo fwo fwo fwo!”
“If his social position increases, so will the amount of troublesome things? Won’t Moroha find that unpleasant?”
Then I’ll just need to gallantly support him! Moroha can just focus on the big picture, and I’ll take care of all the little things!”
Shizuno was going to say something to solve it quickly, but Satsuki threw all the needless fear away.
“Perhaps this is being blessed with a little sister, Fwooo fwo fwo fwo fwo!”
In the end, she puffed up her chest and laughed loudly.
Shizuno steadily stared at that laughter.
Her mask like expression was broken and she looked like she was gazing at something radiant.
It was a rare act, but, caught up in her triumph, Satsuki didn’t notice.
“I want to learn from your optimism.”
“Are you calling me an idiot!?”
“No. Unfortunately, it’s from the heart. How annoying.”
Satsuki was shocked, it didn’t look like she was teasing her at all.

What turn of events was this? Had she eaten something bad?
As she was going to ask, her tea came along with bad timing.
The waiter placed a cup in front of Satsuki and filled it from the pot. They then left the pot, covered with a tea cosy to stop it going cold. It was only natural service, but the timing was somewhat annoying.
They left with a bow, and the mood had changed from one where she could ask.
“That’s fine, the tea’s nice too♪”
Satsuki took a mouthful and forgot about it.
She enjoyed her tea wordlessly for a while, the only sound being Shizuno flipping pages in her magazine.
Finally, the entrance opened and the bell to signal a customer chimed cheerfully.
Looking at their face, it was Moroha.
“Sorry, I kept you waiting.”
Even though he got there exactly on time, he made his way to the table with an apology.
Satsuki suddenly couldn’t reply.
She was lost for words.
Moroha was leading a friendly Maya by the hand.

Moroha had sat with Satsuki and Shizuno on each side, with Maya in the seat opposite.
Maya had at first tried to sit on Moroha’s lap, but Satsuki had pulled her off by force and put her in the opposite seat.
“I’m against violence.”
Satsuki menaced the tearful girl. How childish.
“Why’s she here?”
Still glaring, Satsuki began her interrogation.
She had the look of a wife who’d just caught her spouse red-handed in an affair.
“I asked Moroha to bring me.”
“Why are you being so casual with your elders!?”
“Moroha asked me to call him that.”
“That’s too familiar! How shameless!”
“You’re being absurd.”
“I’m! Right! First off, barging in on Moroha’s and my alone time is already sacrilegiously over familiar!”
Satsuki tore into her irritably.
As expected, difficult questions right from the start.
“Ahh…”
Moroha searched for words to avoid souring the mood further.

He wanted the kind of mood they could eat lunch first in.
If she ate tasty food, Satsuki would relax, and surely be willing to listen.
That was why he'd chosen a coffee lounge beyond his means, and decided to treat them. And of course, if he made Shizuno and Maya pay for their own when he was treating Satsuki, that would be inconsistent.
This investment was like a leap into the dark, he couldn't waste it.
"She and Moroha became room-mates. It's the principal's decision."
Shizuno swiftly exposed them!
Cooling her coffee cup, she reproached him with her mask-like face.
"What are you thinking!?"
With uncontainable energy, Satsuki shot forwards in her chair.
"Like she said, it's the principal's decision!"
"Then if the principal decided you'd die, you'd die!?"
"Again with that primary schooler's crappy logic…"
Discouraged, Moroha pushed on Satsuki's forehead, telling her to calm down and pushing her back into her chair.
"It's like looking after a relative's child for a while you know? Why are you so up in arms about it?"
"Then you can look after your sister too! I'll be your room-mate too!"
"The principal's not going to allow that…"
Thank about our ages, seriously.
If Maya had been the same age, they'd have never shared a room.
At Moroha's reminder of how things worked, Satsuki turned away in a huff.
Her side-tail swished in displeasure.
Then, where she turned, she glared steadily at Maya.
"Hey, you… Just because Moroha's affectionate with you, don't get carried away… I'm Moroha's one and only sister, throughout Heaven and Earth…"
Satsuki nagged at the ten year old girl in a muffled voice, like a delinquent holding a gun to her at point blank range.
"Quit acting like a kid."
Satsuki let out a yelp as Moroha grabbed her by the scruff of the neck and pulled her away from Maya.
"Onii-sama, which of us is your sister!?"
"The one that's not a bully. It's embarrassing as a brother."
"Uuh… S-sorry."
Satsuki shrank in on herself. It's good to be honest.
"I don't want you to worry."
Maya comforted Satsuki with an angelic smile.
"I'm not Moroha's sister. I won't steal your brother from you."
"R-really?"
Satsuki asked, half in fear, half in doubt.
"Yes, I know right from wrong."
But seeing Maya's innocent smile, she relaxed.
"Then I'm fine! That's right, it's like looking after a super distant relative's brat. Living with a midget like this isn't anything to worry about. You'd

doubt my credentials as the world's greatest little sister if I was jealous of this! Fwooo fwo fwo fwo!"
In sudden good humour, she laughed loudly.
"Yes, if I was treated like a little sister, I couldn't marry him, teehee."
It seemed like she couldn't hear Maya's words, said with her angelic smile.
A guffawing Satsuki and a grinning Maya.
Just from the sight, it was a friendly gathering of beautiful sisters around a table.
As the mood eased, Moroha's coffee and Maya's café au lait arrived.
"How many sugars?"
Shizuno asked after remaining a spectator for so long.
"Thank you, I'd like three."
Shizuno nodded and with a kind smile they'd never seen before put sugar into the cup.
"You may have fooled the idiot, but remember that I'm not dealt with with ordinary means."
With completely unsmiling eyes, at absolute zero, she quietly informed Maya.
Maya's face paled and she shakily nodded her head.
"This one's a tough enemy."
She downheartedly tasted the sweet café au lait.
"The pair of you, don't bully kids."
"Phew. Well, as long as Moroha thinks like that, she'd got no chance, so it's fine."
"Even if you protected me, I've got mixed feelings…"
"It's just like Moroha said, Urushibara! Don't you have any shame, picking on a child!?"
Shizuno let out a heavy sigh, Maya smiled wryly and Satsuki showed her habit of being blind to her own shortcomings.
Moroha ignored the wilful interjection.
Bringing Satsuki and Shizuno together had always been as noisy as a chemical reaction.
Adding Maya to that and it was like nuclear fusion.
The ancients had it right.
If you put three women together, it would be noisy.
Asking for a light meal, they spent the entire afternoon being noisy.
The atmosphere was so stylish and calm, why couldn't they get along better?
Using so much money was pointless. A waste. Moroha dropped his shoulders in despair.
Even so, perhaps sweet things held a tremendous magic over girls?
As the dessert came out, they instantly behaved.
This blessed time meant that even though not an instant ago they were only fighting, their tongues were focussed not on verbal attacks, but on the sweet flavour.

“Considering this milk catalana, I’ll forgive you leaving me behind to play last night.”
Maya cracked through the vitrified caramel with a spoon.
Somehow it had a cuteness associated with an otter breaking shellfish.
“Oh yeah, what did the chairman want in the end?”
Satsuki was bad mannered, asking while holding the fork with the cake’s cream in her mouth.
“He asked if I wanted to become a rank S.”
Moroha replied half-heartedly while enjoying the scent of the coffee.
Maya turned knowing eyes between Moroha and Shizuno.
When she was looking at Shizuno, her eyes were particularly condemning.
“Woooow! That’s my Nii-sama, wooooow!”
Satsuki’s surprise, on the other hand, was enough that she leapt to her feet and shouted.
It was a problem for the restaurant, and her pointlessly sparking gaze was irritating.
“I refused though.”
“Gyah, why did you refuse!? Such a waste, a waste, a waste, a waste!”
As if Moroha were possessing her, so repeatedly called it a waste.
“It’s rank S, right? You’d be the seventh of only six in the world, right? The same rank as Sir Edward, right? Do you get it, Moroha!?”
“I declined it because I got it, right? I’m not that impressive a person.”
“You’re definitely suitable! You’ve got my guarantee, so there’s no doubting it!”
“Isn’t that just a relative seeing the best?”
“Geez, why won’t you understand!? You blockhead, Moroha!”
Moroha calmly retorted, but Satsuki slapped the table rather than stamping her feet.
“You’re fine even if Moroha goes far away?”
Maya checked with Satsuki, somewhat puzzled.
“Shizuno did that earlier! I’m fine with it!”
“You’d be fine if Moroha gave up on school?”
“I would, of course I’d be fi- Whaaaat!?”
As if struck by a bolt from the blue, Satsuki yelled hysterically.
“If he was given rank and took centre stage in the Order, it’s inevitable.”
Shizuno was looking on from the side-lines, but interjected.
“Of course, it’s not like you couldn’t follow him, is it? You’d just be separated for three years.”
With small dimples, she jokingly teased her.
Satsuki faced Moroha.
Her eyes gradually moistened and her body trembled slightly.
“Waah, don’t leave me, Nii-samaa…”
“I told you I refused, right? Relax.”
Moroha softly comforted a sniffling Satsuki.
“Really?”

“Yeah, I’m not going anywhere.”
“Really really?”
“Yeah, really really.”
That kind of conversation repeated about ten times.
Until she calmed down, he patiently stayed with her.
“Tch.”
Ignored by everyone, Shizuno made an intentionally loud click of her tongue.
Maya then steadily stared at her.
“Is there something on my face?”
“Do you think Moroha should become a rank S?”
Maya turned the question from Satsuki onto Shizuno.
Her voice was hard. As if this time she was completely cutting to the heart.
Shizuno didn’t answer for a while. Could she not answer?
It was an explosive mood next to Moroha comforting Satsuki.
“…My brother things so.”
Shizuno carefully chose her words and answered.
“Do you think that yourself.”
Maya pressed further.
“… It’s not how Moroha says it, but even as a woman of the Urushibara family, I don’t hold any great influence. Whatever I myself think, I can’t do anything for Moroha.”
“Won’t you be an ally?”
“I…”
Shizuno faltered.
Her expression was still mask-like. However, under the table, her hands were clenched into fists and shaking.
As if she was resisting something.
“Shizuno’s always helping me, so that’s fine, right?”
Moroha quickly noticed and spoke decisively without looking at Shizuno.
He’d gone to her house yesterday, so he already knew that she was being torn by her family’s circumstances.
“If you say that, then okay, Moroha…”
A meek Maya withdrew.
“I’m not intending on becoming a rank S, so none of that matters. More importantly, I had something to talk to you two about.”
Still rubbing Satsuki’s back, Moroha began to speak.
“Yesterday, when I was on my way back from Shizuno’s there was suddenly a fight between White Irons.”
Satsuki and Shizuno’s expressions stiffened.
Maya had already heard, but she was awfully surprised at first.
Individual Saviours had strength on the levels of armies. So the White Knight Order, each nation and the UN strictly regulated them, so a Saviour appearing like a wild dog and whimsically attacking was fundamentally unheard of. That’s how unusual it was.

“Is it one of our students?”
“I can’t say for sure… but I don’t think there’s anyone that strong apart from Isurugi-senpai.”
“That strong!? I-I’m glad you’re safe…”
Satsuki sent an astonished, respectful gaze his way.
“Are there no clues?”
“Not at all. I had Maya talk to the principal, and the teachers are investigating now.”
“Just speculation would cause a panic, so for now we want to keep it a secret.”
“There’s no one other than you two I can trust.”
Moroha spoke frankly, Satsuki had a happy expression, and even Shizuno didn’t appear entirely unmoved.
“I’d have liked to catch her there, but she was strong, and if we both kept fighting at full power, I can’t even think how much we’d have damaged the area. Kamii-senpai warned me not to go overboard too. So I thought I should let her escape.”
“That’s right. The day you get houses involved, your guilty conscience from the other day won’t compare.”
Shizuno agreed and Moroha nodded gravely.
It was after defeating the nine-headed hydra.
Moroha had fought at full power, and used too much force to destroy the monster, carelessly blowing away the huge shopping mall.
To cover up the incident, the White Knight Order had said there were several gas explosions, but what kind of gas explosions would have caused that scene of hell?
After that battle, Moroha had once gone to see the place, and was stuck dumb at the ravages of what he’d done.
A landmark had vanished, and he’d heard the area’s redevelopment plan had been completely undone.
It may have been called an act of God, but it was Moroha’s fault that the town’s development had been stalled.
He hadn’t been told to take responsibility in fact, he’d been praised, however…
Moroha had firmly vowed to himself to never do it again.
If last night, he’d focussed on capturing the helmeted woman, the woman would have fought like a cornered rat, and that nightmare would have been all too likely to occur again.
Moroha suddenly shuddered and looked to the window as if seeking the sunlight.
The sweltering sun of the unusually dry rainy season shone off the white tables on the open terrace.
A moment before, the atmosphere was that of the early summer.
In that clear scene outside, Moroha suddenly saw an amazingly eye-drawing man.

Mixed in with a lively humming.
“Chaa, chaa, chaa, chaa, charanra, ranrarararanra, ranra♪”
The man that had caught Moroha’s eye cheerfully walked into the restaurant.
He was a foreigner, in his late twenties.
Even dyed hair wouldn’t be such a pure, flashy silver as his.
Sunglasses covered about half of his face, but he seemed like he’d be a dandy.
He was tall, one hundred and eighty centimetres or so.
Moroha steadily observed him. He was a strangely curious man.
There was a vague stirring in Moroha’s head.
The dandy took out his earphones and stopped humming as if he’d heard something, and looked briefly around the restaurant.
There weren’t many customers today, so there were many empty tables, but he purposely chose the one next to them and sat down.
Thanks to that, they couldn’t talk about the helmeted woman any more.
They exchanged looks saying they’d continue it later. They’d take every precaution, they didn’t want to be overheard.
Suddenly losing their topic of conversation, a silence descended on the table.
Naturally, the sound of the dandy next to them flipping through the menu was extremely audible.
They couldn’t help but listen.
The waiter came to take the order and then, a problem occurred.
The man spoke cheerily, but it seemed he was speaking English.
“There’s no helping it.”
A meddlesome Satsuki stood up without hesitation.
She forced her way between the waiter and dandy and offered a translation.
English was the official language of the White Knight Order, so even Akane Academy put a lot of effort into their English classes. Satsuki was a show-off, but she also put the effort in, so she’d worked hard at English too.
“Thank you, young lady. I’d like to order, but I have a slight issue.”
The dandy spoke friendlily but not over-familiarly to Satsuki, leaving no doubt he was a gentleman.
“This menu doesn’t have pictures, or any English explanation!”
Perhaps in triumph at being able to show a talent she’d fostered, Satsuki spoke happily.
Incidentally, Moroha could hold a conversation, thanks to learning as a student, Shizuno was fluent thanks to her family, and Maya’s great-grandmother was English so she had a good grasp of English too.
“Kind young lady, would you order black tea in my stead?”

“Of course, leave it to me!”
Satsuki thumped her chest.
Darjeeling, Assam? She asked, pointing at the Japanese on the menu.
The dandy gave his order with a smile.
“Then, use Mackwoods Golden Tip leaves, if the milk is pasteurised then I’m not fussy about where it came from. As for the sugar… let’s see, I came all the way here, so I may as well be a little naughty. I hear there’s refined Japanese sugar in this country? I’d like to try some matched with the tea. The water should be sixty degrees, and as for the cup, today I’m feeling-”
“If you’re going to be like that, go ask at Starmucks!”
Satsuki inadvertently retorted in Japanese.
Even for Starmucks, that was a little too much thought Moroha.
“Waiter, bring him the most expensive black tea in the shop and overcharge him three times!”
“Don’t you start, it’s an issue for the waiter.”
The dandy definitely couldn’t read the atmosphere of the restaurant, and he understood Satsuki’s feelings, but even so, she was making unreasonable demands of the staff too.
Besides, the man may just not know how things worked in Japan.
Moroha cleared his throat.
“Did you come from England?”
He spoke to the foreigner he’d never seen before in his life.
Forgive the awkwardness.
“Exactly! I’m impressed you could tell.”
Maybe he’d felt the good will, but the dandy also slowed a little as he replied.
“You seem to be a tea connoisseur so I associated it with there. I’m sure you can easily find genuine tea-houses everywhere over there.”
“Ha ha ha! No no, not at all, outside of hotels they just use teabags you know?”
“Order something outrageous for him, Satsuki.”
“Hee hee hee, roger!”
Why you John Bull, you just came here to make fun of Japan!
Moroha was enraged and spurred Satsuki on.
Satsuki ordered the restaurant’s legendary tea, the waiter swallowed their saliva with a “So this day has finally come.” And told the kitchen.
Before long, a single glass of black tea was placed in front of the dandy.
It was an iced tea, somewhat clouded with milk.
Lumps of something could be seen in it.
“Is this… tapioca milk tea? That’s somewhat heretical and not at all to my liking.”
“It’s this restaurant’s manager’s original masterpiece.”
“Oh ho ho, that kind of heresy stirs up my curiosity in its own way.”
The dandy determinedly took a sip, with a look of burning curiosity.
“And its name is Natto Milk Tea!”

“Bleeeeehhhh!”
He spectacularly spat out everything in his mouth.
Satsuki had predicted it and gracefully side-stepped.
“Guh, I feel ill. W-what is this!? It’s filling my mouth with the texture of something like frogspawn, guuuh.”
He gave a disgusting gourmet style description as he writhed in anguish.
“It’s not just heresy! This is utter blasphemy against tea! A declaration of war against my country!”
In the end, the good adult became enraged.
“Damn it!”
Throwing off his gentlemanliness, he hurled abusive language at the heavens.
Satsuki was still giggling maliciously at what she’d done.
Amongst that, Moroha’s face alone stiffened like he was in another world.
At the same time, there was a flash of purple.
“Geez, the table’s all soaked. Take responsibility for ordering it and drink it.”
Satsuki was wiping at the table with a cloth as he pulled her away from the dandy, covering her back.
“W-what’s wrong all of a sudden!?”
He didn’t pay attention to her surprise, he didn’t have the time.
“Everyone… stay away from him.”
Moroha warned them quietly.
Hearing the dandy’s abusive language, his mind flashed back.
Last night, at the park, in the middle of battle, he’d attacked the helmeted woman, she’d been trapped, and sworn. It was in the middle of battle, so he’d not really caught it, but there were vestiges in his subconscious.
“It was ‘damn it…’.”
He remembered. It was just an instant, but she’d let out English.
Moroha’s mind turned more. The flashback didn’t stop. Like a puzzle, it was all falling into place.
The rumour among the seniors that there was a super bigshot coming to inspect hem. One of the Six Heads. One of only six S rank Saviours. The origin of the White Knight Order’s name, the White Knight. The head of the British Division.
Sir Edward Lampard.
All the pieces fit, and drew a picture of a person.
Whether he was the man himself, or just an accomplice, he didn’t know.
In the end…
The dandy took off his sunglasses jokingly.
“Oh my, what’s wrong… Moroha-kun?”
With a sharp glint in his eyes, he called Moroha’s name.
For a mere moment, his green eyes sparkled with a dangerous light.
He knew from the start. He played the fool and got close.
“Is that helmeted woman your friend?”

“She’s called Angela Johnson. I’d like you to remember it. It’s the name of my cute subordinate, that’s sworn revenge on you.”
“Moroha… did you fight with ‘AJ’?”
Shizuno gasped, she’d had no interest in the two man comedy act with Satsuki and the foreigner.
“You know her?”
“She’s Sir Edward’s right hand, she uses twin swords, right? She’s famous in the White Knight Order.”
“Yeah, she did use that kind of weapon.”
“…And you said there were no clues.”
“I didn’t think it was that rare a weapon.”
Moroha protested Shizuno’s shock.
In the first place, Saviours themselves trampled common sense, so it was hard to distinguish what was common and what was characteristic among them.
Well, that in itself could be said to be learnt at Akane Academy.
“But… that decides it.”
If he was calling the right hand of the English branch’s head his cute subordinate.
Then he himself was Sir Edward Lampard.
“N-no way…”
Finding out he was a super VIP, Satsuki was overawed, finding out after having him drink something awful, even more so.
Shizuno was also attentive, Maya hiding anxiously behind her back.
Seeing the girls like that, the leading figure of the White Knight Order said.
“Now now, let’s be frank.”
And once again cheerily winked.
Perhaps because of that, Satsuki’s attitude didn’t change.
“What’s the English head doing here?”
To protect them, Moroha took a half step forward.
Pressing the man with a grim stare.
“How cool, so sharp even though you know it’s me. Not something someone normal could do. Are they that important to you?”
Edwards gaze moved between Satsuki and Maya before finally settling on Shizuno.
“Don’t mess with me!”
Moroha spread his arms to protect her from that line of site.
“I reaaaly know, it’s fine. A gentleman would never harm a lady. First of all, I’m only interested in you.”
Edward composedly crossed his legs.
He only spoke a few words, and Moroha suddenly had an awful headache.
Like something was beating at a wall within his mind.
It was almost an alarm.

“Mere students defeated a dreadnought class that should have been faced with all of the Japanese branch’s forces. As expected of the first Ancient Dragon. I’m greatly curious just how much power you’re hiding.”
Edward leant forwards, resting his arms on his lap and placing his chin in his hands.
He was relaxed, his entire body began shimmering with light.
It was a vivid purple prana, reminiscent of amethysts.
A pure, deep, noble light.
The moment Moroha saw his prana shine, his headache worsened in warning, he instinctively coated himself in prana.
At that moment, Edward had already vanished.
More precisely, he should have been sitting in an awkward posture to get up from, but was standing in front of Moroha.
A fist coated in prana was raised ready to attack.
It was like a jump cut between frames in a film, forcefully connecting an unnatural scene.
Fast enough to change the meaning of ‘fast’, its speed was like a teleport.
It was only natural for a Dark Mage like Shizuno, but it wasn’t visible even to the reflexes of a White Iron like Satsuki. The two were still facing the empty chair and hadn’t noticed anything had happened.
Only one, Moroha could react.
What Edward used made a mockery of distance, warping it, making it zero.
Things like ‘Shukuchi’ and ‘Mubyoushi’ only existed in stories for martial arts, but in Ancestral Arts, they existed.
Its name was Light Technique, Alkaid.
The highest class technique derived from God Speed Link, a secret technique among secret techniques, crowned with the name of the seventh star in the Plow.
He clearly understood it in the blink of an eye.
“This is an S rank Saviour’s strength…!”
Moroha carefully watched, staring at Edward’s fist, that seemed to be wreathed in violet flames.
The ultra-high speed hook from point blank range’s trajectory stretched out like toffee as he grasped it all in what felt like stretched out time.
Moroha didn’t move.
Though it may be unarmed, it was an S-class Saviour’s attack. If it hit it wouldn’t end with nothing.
But still, he didn’t move in front of the advancing fist.
Without even a tremor, he lay in wait.
Nevertheless, all of his nerves were focussed on any small change in the prana coating the advancing fist.
Then, with a sharpness that was soundless cutting through the air, the fist, solidly, on Moroha’s cheek hit… almost, just before it would, it stopped.
In the end, Moroha didn’t stir until the end.
The fierce wind from the fist ruffled his hair.

“…Eh? Huh? ……Eh?”
As the aftershocks washed over Satsuki, she finally noticed Edward’s attack. She just blinked for a while.
“Eeeeeeeehhhhhhhh!?”
After a length of time Moroha could have been massacred ten times in, she screamed.
Shizuno had also lost the vigour in her expression, and Maya had fallen over.
Without paying any attention to their reaction, Edward spoke cheerfully, his fist still against Moroha’s cheek.
“Can I ask you something, Moroha? If I were in your position, I’d draw out the punch to the last moment, then evade fast enough to make an afterimage and at the same time, take advantage of my relaxed guard and circle round to counterattack from behind.”
But his green eyes weren’t smiling in the slightest.
Edward asked.
“Could you not move? Or did you not move?”
Moroha answered.
“If you wanted to kill me, I would without a doubt be dead.”
He played the fool and shrugged his shoulders.
“I see. What a let-down.”
Edward moved away from Moroha and put his sunglasses on.
“Would you give my money for the bother to the waiter?”
He took a ten thousand yen not out of his wallet and left it on the table.
“Tan, tan, tuatara, tararatata, tariratata, tarirata♪”
Edward put his earphones in and his humming echoed through the restaurant.
Satsuki, Shizuno and Maya were all dumbfounded as he left in the same jaunty way as he arrived.
“What was that…?”
Satsuki hadn’t followed everything and her head had gone blank as she murmured.
“Are you okay, Moroha? Did anything happen?”
“Do you need me to kiss it better?”
Shizuno and Maya came from his left and right and made sure he was okay.
“Thank you, I’m not hurt… But what a scary person.”
He still hadn’t relaxed from facing off against Edward. His body was still stiff.
Satsuki regained her footing and said.
“Thanks to fighting Momo-senpai, I’m used to a White Iron’s speed, but that was just unfair…”
On the verge of crying, she clung to Moroha.
“This is the first time I’ve seen it in reality, I guess the legends weren’t false…”

“…To think there was this much of a difference in level between you… It’s a little hard to believe.”
The shock Satsuki received was passed on to Maya and Shizuno.
Then, the three fell silent.
Inside the suddenly silent restaurant, thanks to the patrons scared by the violence, the atmosphere grew heavier and heavier.
Moroha also didn’t say anything, he took a deep breath as if he only just remembered to breathe.
He collapsed into a seat and leant heavily against its back.
With an angry look, he kept glaring at the ceiling.

Chapter 5 – Qualifications of an Older Brother

An important guest was coming this early in the morning.
Akane Academy's chairman, Urushibara Tadanori received that report and went to his back garden.
There was a terrace used for garden parties, and at a table was his long awaited guest, enjoying a morning tea.
His smartphone was placed there, playing an exhilarating tune in place of BGM. It wasn't classical, though Tadanori didn't know it, it was music from a game in Japan. It clashed heavily with the early morning mood of the elegant western house.
At his side was a maid serving him.
It wasn't a member of the house's staff, it was the guest's attendant.
The beautiful white woman was wearing a British style maid outfit.
"Tea brewed with Japanese water truly is exceptional.
The guest enjoyed the second cup that the beautiful maid had brewed for him.
"If you had informed me, I would have sent a car to greet you, Sir Edward."
While bowing like a Japanese person, Tadanori used perfect English as if he were a native.
He faced his long awaited guest, t of the English branch.
"We actually arrived the day before yesterday, but we had some matters to take care of."
Edward answered with his cup in hand.
"Moroha was his name, right? We went to test his real strength.
Tadanori almost swallowed his tongue in surprise at those words.
"…Surely you yourself didn't fight, sir…?"
That was essentially an intervention, Tadanori went to protest.
"I just tested him a little. I swear I didn't rampage, first of all, no one was hurt. Surely no one can complain about that little?"
At Edward's clear explanation, Tadanori tentatively agreed.
His companion wasn't so foolish as to tell a lie that could be immediately exposed.
"And you know, that Moroha… he was a total let-down."
Edward just informed him of his frank conclusion.
This too was a bolt from the blue for Tadanori. Though he wasn't so inexperienced to show his turmoil on the surface.
"Did you say a let-down…?"
"You were the one that requested I certify Moroha as an S rank, even if it was a lie, right?"
Tadanori nodded in affirmation.

In his schemes to have Moroha become an S rank, his last push was to have it certified by the English branch head, and truly lie.
That was why Edward had been invited all the way from England. His inspection of the academy was nothing but a pretext. Neither Tadanori nor Edward cared about that.
“I want to get along well with the Japanese branch, so I wanted to listen to that request. But it’s a little tricky to call that an S rank. You could call a dog a wolf, but calling a cat a tiger is a little too much, right? Say we lied, all it’d take would be a strike from Russia’s Lightning Empress to reveal us, and then we’d be buried in complaints.”
Edward started talking politics in a casual voice, as if he was merely talking about the weather.
The ‘Lightning Empress’ was a pseudonym of the Russian branch’s leader, she was at loggerheads with the Japanese branch.
If that kind of political opponent discovered their lies, it would bring bad consequences to the Japanese branch, and following on from there, the ringleader Tadanori.
He understood the logic, but he was reluctant to agree.
“That’s strange. Haimura Moroha has actually defeated a Dreadnought class, you know?”
“It is, I thought I’d go along with your plan because of that. But when I tested him, he wasn’t as good as I thought.”
At Edward’s side, the maid was glaring at Tadanori with a dreadful gaze. Her eyes were asking him if he was truly doubting the White Knight himself.
Of course, Tadanori himself understood the logic.
But that didn’t change that it was hard to swallow as he made a troubled face.
“Perhaps the two that fought with Moroha were strong enough?”
While voicing his guess, Edward tugged on the maid’s sleeve.
“For instance, if there were several A rank Saviours like Angela here, it could only take a few to-”
“However, didn’t you hear the report that it would take a full mobilisation of the Japanese branch to defeat that nine-headed hydra?”
“I did, that’s their tactic for minimising casualties. But, if you don’t care about casualties and fight insanely to the death, then about one out of ten times, you’ll win. With a miracle, one in ten-thousand times, all three will come back alive. If you consider a miracle could have occurred, it’s not that illogical a thought. We have preconceptions of the Ancient Dragon, and are overestimating Moroha. Overlooking the two that were with him.”
Tadanori placed a hand to his mouth and thought for a while.
Honestly, Edward’s words may sound high handed, but…
Not being a Saviour, Tadanori didn’t really have the knowledge to dispute it.
If the White Knight himself said so, then he could only assume it to be so.
And he didn’t think Edward had anything to gain by lying here.

“What was it, Shizuno? Your sister is actually an amazing Saviour.”
Edward’s cheery voice proclaimed his admiration.
Calling it a lie if he thought otherwise.
This was again a preconception. Just as he had been certain Moroha was strong because he was an ancient dragon, Tadanori was convinced of the opposite case.
Because Shizuno was his sister, he’d made light of her from the start.
“You don’t compromise on your own evaluation but aren’t you too harsh on your relatives? Perhaps that is why the Urushibara family has so many skilled people.”
Even though Edward was teasing, he couldn’t refute it.
“…I suppose Haimura Moroha really wasn’t that impressive.”
Tadanori could barely hide his disappointment at having to reconsider his plans.
There was a vast gulf between S rank and A rank.
He had thought that Moroha had just barely reached the other side of that gulf…
But in reality, it was through pooling resources with Shizuno and the other that they had managed to get there.
“He’s plenty impressive for an A rank. Both Moroha and your sister are.”
Edward smoothed things over with a wry smile.
Certainly, his sister being a Black Mage of that calibre was a happy miscalculation.
However, Tadanori still felt strongly that the real catch had gotten away.
As Edward smiled wryly, he suddenly snapped his fingers at a really good idea.
Tadanori also inferred the situation.
“It’s difficult to say so soon after being unable to carry out your request, but would you listen to mine, Tadanori?”
“What would that be?”
“What would you say to having your sister study abroad with us?”
Tadanori was careful to conceal any hint of shock at the blunt question.
Simultaneously, he took a cautious approach and didn’t reply immediately.
However.
“You’re aware too, right? England doesn’t have many mages, and we’re in a spot of trouble. So of course, I’d like to invite Shizuno after she’s shown such potential. Of course, I’d promise that she’d be highly placed after graduating in England. What do you think? I’m sure the Japanese branch will be displeased to lose one of only a few Dark Saviours, but it’s not bad for the Urushibara family, right?”
As he listened to Edward speak, this time he had to suppress his smile. The disappointment he’d felt earlier vanished in an instant.
Edward’s request held that much charm for him.
“Indeed, not at all.”
He rapidly calculated and answered.

The Urushibara family already had strong channels to the Japanese branch. If on top of that, Shizuno could attain a high position within the main British branch, it would shore up their influence within the White Knight Order.
He'd planned to have Moroha become an S rank and invited Edward. That plan had been readily derailed. But even with that, there was an unexpected silver lining.
"I thought you would be okay with it! All that's left then are Shizuno's thoughts herself."
"Ah, there's no need to worry about that."
Tadanori calmly declared and took over.
"Her answer will most certainly be yes, please wait a while."
He left with a bow. Heading into the grounds with a strong stride.
Turning his back on Edward, his first smile split his face.
Not that of a teacher, or a brother.
That of a politician, used to using other people as pieces on a board.
After Tadanori left, Angela, waiting at Edward's shoulder, spoke.
"He fell surprisingly easily."
Edward frankly revealed the trick.
"You see, Tadanori's a highly capable man who's willing to use any means to satisfy his ambitions. But precisely because of that, he's easy to control and lead by his greed too."
"I see, impressive."
His subordinate was entranced at the unusual scheming of the White Knight.
"Truly, just with a little pretend prod I can't help but feel a little dissatisfied. If I can, I'd like to fight at full power, with Moroha at full power."
Moroha's half-hearted personality and Edward's restrictions from violence in the country prevented that.
"But, if things went as I said, and Tadanori and Moroha were to clash… see?"
Edward chuckled as he enjoyed his tea.
Angela stared at his profile and said.
"However, why are you so attached to Moroha, my lord?"
"It's a very… hmm, important matter to the Order."
Edward drained his cup and placed it down.
"The English main branch and each subdivision, those six organisations are currently maintaining a miraculous balance. There may be skirmishes on the surface, we're all temporarily united by our duty to subjugate Metaphysicals."
"The number six is good, that's what China's elder says."
If a faction were to split into two or three, competition would arise.
"And that balance, in other words, can be easily broken by any single incident."
Angela nodded in understanding.

“If for example, a seventh appeared?”
“Yes, like if a seventh appeared.”
That’s how Edward thought.
That when a seventh appeared, the White Knight Order would split into two.
Into four and three.
Therefore, what country they appeared in, and what kind of person they were was very important.
They were a key person.
Then, dependent on them, the fate of the White Knight Order would be decided.
Whether they would act as saviours of humanity under Edward’s leadership.
Or whether the strong would rule over the weak as the ‘Lightning Empress’ and ‘PSG’ desired.
“So even if I have to use overbearing methods, I need to properly evaluate Moroha.”
Edward stood and left the terrace.
Angela followed respectfully three steps behind him.
The empty cup was left on the table.
As if signalling-
The time for tea was over.

That day, even as morning home room began, Shizuno didn’t appear in the classroom.
From his seat right at the back of the middle row, Moroha gazed at her empty seat.
“It appears Urushibara-san will be absent today due to some family circumstances.”
The homeroom teacher, Tanaka, reported before taking attendance.
“What are they?”
Moroha raised his hand and asked.
“I’ve only heard that it’s due to some family circumstances.”
But Tanaka too answered worriedly. It seemed he really didn’t know.
Some family circumstances. Urushibara family circumstances. Moroha’s stomach dropped.
Satsuki felt vaguely uneasy too and looked between the empty seat and Moroha.
Home room and classes both passed without trouble, but Moroha’s feelings were heavy.
When break time came, he phoned Shizuno’s mobile, but there was no answer at all.
There was no response no matter how many times he messaged.

He asked Tanaka for her house number, but he said he couldn't give it because of privacy concerns. Akane Academy had the weakness of not needing a class telephone network, being an all-boarding school.
Calls, messages, neither arrived.
As Moroha checked his phone, his foreboding grew and grew. Like there was a gaping hole somewhere in his body, and poison was pouring in.
Shizuno might be like a lantern at noon, or an insincere student, but she'd never take a whole day off like this.
So until now, he didn't know.
That being out of contact with Shizuno for a day.
That that alone would give him such a feeling of unease.
It was unsettling, like something that should be there wasn't where it should be.
It was almost as if he couldn't feel his arm.
It was an emptiness that was difficult to put into words.
During break and lunch, Satsuki worried, but that alone couldn't cover it.
"Ah ha… ah ha ha… I thought she was a gloomy woman… but when she's not here… there just doesn't seem to be any point…"
Finally even Satsuki whined with a forlorn look.
Of course, she didn't put her best effort in class.
They may have let classes and practical lessons pass them by, but they couldn't do that with after school training. The Strikers' eyes were not so easily deceived, the demon vice-captain scolded them time and time again, Isurugi frowned, and Kamii-senpai guffawed.
After what felt like an eternity, school finally finished.
Time that would have passed in an instant with them not really being there turned into a painfully long half a day.
Moroha sat cross-legged on the lawn in the courtyard, dyed red in the evening.
Just once more, he tried phoning Shizuno.
Satsuki was next to him, watching with imploring eyes.
They'd decided that if this didn't go through, they'd go to the chairman's house.
Moroha put the phone to his ear and counted the rings.
Five. Ten. He sighed at the repetition. Fifteen. Twenty. He closed his eyes, ready to give up.
But.
"…Hello?"
On the twenty first ring, Shizuno's voice sounded from the speaker.
Moroha instinctively pumped his fist.
"Hello, Shizuno? Your nose sounds blocked, did you catch a cold?"
"…That's right."
"Liar. Why weren't you at school? Family circumstances?"
"…"
Shizuno was silent.

Moroha waited patiently for her to be honest, but it appeared she was stubborn too.
A contest of endurance was Shizuno's specialty. The two months since they met had taught him this.
With no other choice, Moroha brought out his trump card.
"If you don't answer, I'll come over to your house."
"I don't think Nii-san will let you in, will he?"
Moroha quietly patted his lap. He'd confirmed she was at home.
If she had been even further away, in the worst case, he'd thought that could happen, so it was a small mercy.
"It doesn't have anything to do with the chairman, does it? I'm coming to see you."
Moroha proclaimed, showing his own stubbornness.
He heard a heavy sigh from the other end of the phone.
"Don't come. I don't want to see you."
Shizuno spoke in a tight voice, as if her stomach were knotted.
"Why? If you don't tell me the reason, I won't accept it."
"I'll be studying abroad in England. I'm leaving the day after tomorrow."
"…This is sudden."
Moroha's eyes sharpened.
But he wasn't surprised. England. England again.
Sir Edward's face flashed within his head.
Accompanied by another, the chairman's reptilian face.
"I wasn't at all sure how I should tell you. But if we meet, the lingering affection will worsen and…"
Shizuno sadly said, not telling anything as her voice faded out.
Moroha's bit his lip in anger.
"If you yourself want to go, then I'll be quiet and support you. But you don't, do you? That *brother* of yours decided something strange, didn't he? Don't listen to him."
"I have to. I can't oppose things my brother- the Urushibara family decides."
In a stuffy voice, but stifled with emotion, Shizuno explained detachedly.
Moroha pounded his free fist into the grass.
Satsuki recoiled in fear.
That was how terrifying Moroha's face was.
"Listen, Shizuno-"
Directionless rage dyed his vision scarlet.
A violent tide of fury swirled within him, engulfing his entire body in a whirlpool.
His final words were driven from his throat by emotion, to Shizuno, scolding her.
"-In this world, there's no chain that can bind a person to another."
Shizuno's gasp came from the phone.
And then, a faint sniffling sigh.
She wept.

At first she could stand it, and it was quiet. But eventually, it burst forth in a torrent.
Moroha was quiet, and calmly waited.
Shizuno answered through sobs.
“Even without your memories… you still… say the same things… Shuu Saura.”
This time, it was Moroha’s turn to gasp.
“Shizuno! You really are the Witch of the Unde-”
“I’m sorry… Goodbye. I’m… so happy you called.”
With a heartbroken voice, Shizuno hung up.
“That blockhead!”
Moroha went to fling away his phone in rage… but gave up.
He affectionately closed it, and held it to his chest.
Because he remembered. The one who gave him this phone, was none other than Shizuno.
“H-hey… What’s up with Urushibara?”
Satsuki asked nervously.
That made Moroha notice that his face was still in a hard expression.
He expelled all the air in his lungs and forcibly changed his mind-set.
“It seems she’s going to study abroad in England.”
“What!? No way? I haven’t heard anything about it? Why’s it so sudden!?”
“It’s the chairman’s and Sir Edwards’s fault!”
A sweet voice answered in Moroha’s stead.
Looking, they saw Maya panting as she ran from the educational affairs building.
“Mari-oneechan. Just got a phone call from the chairman. Telling her Shizuno would study abroad. Sir Edward already negotiated. With the Japanese branch. And sent her records over.”
“W-why? Does he want something from her?”
Satsuki asked while patting Maya’s back as she sank to the floor next to them, panting hard.
“England has few Black Mages. So, a Black Mage good enough to take down a dreadnought class in a group of only three is something he truly wants. That’s what Sir Edward said. He’s guaranteed her future too, so the chairman’s complicit.”
Moroha showed his understanding with an “I see.” Before saying.
“Thank you Maaya, I understand the situation now.”
He gently rubbed Maya’s head in thanks for hurrying to tell them.
Then, he stood straight up.
His expression was sharp as he glared towards the chairman’s house.
But before he could take a step, Satsuki caught his hand from the floor.
“Are you going to go on your own without saying anything else?”
The expression looking up at him was tinged with criticism for leaving her behind.
“I’m not going to play you know.”

“I know how dangerous it can get. And I want you to take me with you.”
Her gaze was frank and strong.
Even as Moroha gazed at her intensely, it didn’t waver at all.
“I don’t want to just be a princess you leave behind, even after being born again. I want to support you and fight by your side, Nii-sama. I’ll come even if you say no.”
Decisively, neither her gaze, nor her request would yield.
Moroha closed his harsh eyes, and worried for a while before sighing deeply.
When he opened them again, his eyes had softened as he looked at Satsuki with a gaze full of affection.
“Sorry, he’s the opponent, so I’ll take all the help I can get.”
“Right! I’ll try super hard!”
Still holding a rejoicing Satsuki’s hand, he pulled her to her feet.
“I’m a help too, and I won’t get in your way, you know?”
Maya waved her hand like a puppy’s tail.
Moroha grabbed her hand and pulled her up.
A gust of wind blew a swath through the grass.
Moroha raised his chin and once more glared towards the chairman’s house.
He cracked each of his joints on his hands, hanging loosely by his sides.
Then, accompanied by the two, he set off from the school decisively.
Strongly, like a soldier marching to a battlefield.
Moroha was going to Shizuno.

Even if her head wasn’t being covered by water, Shizuno wouldn’t do anything.
She was secluded in the bathroom, letting the shower beat down on her.
If she didn’t, she’d burst into tears.
By nature, Shizuno wasn’t the type to be particularly shaken by emotions.
To say nothing of the confines of the Urushibara family. She’d lived thinking that her boring life would never swing to such extremes of joy and sorrow.
Finally, on seeing how mask like her face became.
The head of the family, her grandfather said she would be successful in the future.
And her cowardly older sister had shunned her, saying she looked like a doll and was creepy.
Naturally, a wall had been made between her and other children her age.
Shizuno herself wasn’t particularly moved by how they saw her.
“But Moroha is different… He alone is different…”
She was only being separated from him, that was all.
But Shizuno couldn’t remain calm.

Even though she herself thought of herself as a woman not moved strongly by emotions.
Her heart and body were both cold, like a woman of ice.
But now, Shizuno's chest burnt, like it was struggling against a searing pain.
"Why… why do I have to go to England!?"
Of course, at first she had refused.
For the first time in her life, she'd gone against her brother's, against the Urushibara family's decision.
In the end, her brother was unmoved.
"If you obediently go to England, I will give up on my plan to coerce Haimura-kun to become an S rank. Now, choose as you will."
As if he was conducting an extremely fair negotiation, he waited for her reply as he steadily stared at her with eyes that seemed to see through everything.
If it had been a threat, she might have been able to muster her courage and resist this one time.
But persuasion… was unfair.
Her brother truly wouldn't pick his methods for achieving his goals. That also had the meaning of using harshness when needed.
When he'd wanted to curry favour with Moroha, he used Shizuno to try and win him over.
Now that he wanted Shizuno to study abroad, he'd use Moroha as an excuse.
For Moroha, Shizuno's response was decided.
"Why was I born into this family!?"
She cursed heaven.
She was jealous of Satsuki. She called Moroha brother without worrying about others, and was as spoiled as she liked.
And she hated herself.
Her weakness, only being able to go along with what her brother demanded, she hated the weakness of her heart.
"Why… am I… always…"
With grief, agitation and hatred, she looked down at her own breasts.
There was a sinister birthmark on them, as if something was carved there.
It had been there since she was born. It normally didn't stand out, but when she was agitated, it swelled red.
Just where in her last life, there was a slave brand.
"Aaahhh… afuu… uuu-uuugh, uwaaaah…"
Her voice raised as she wept, the shower dashing over her.
The shower water and her tears obscured her face.
But they didn't wash away the sadness gathered in her heart.

It being her ‘kind brother’s’ order, Shizuno could only go to dinner.
The staff had clothed her in her best dress, done her hair and dressed her up.
She reluctantly walked towards the large hall on the south side of the house, where her brother and Sir Edward were waiting.
A table set for four was in the corner of the hall that was big enough for a party.
“Let’s be frank.” Was Edward’s request.
In actuality, he alone wasn’t in formal dress, but in a rough summer jacket that didn’t put on airs.
Shizuno arrived at her seat, diagonally across from Edward, next to her brother and the food was brought out.
Only the two men were chatting friendlily, Shizuno only quietly moved her cutlery.
“I’m truly happy you decided to study abroad, Shizuno.”
“With a direct invitation from you, not even my sister could refuse, Sir.”
“Ha ha, I’m your guardian now, so you can freely devote yourself to your studies. You’re not disheartened at all? So if anything troubles you or you need anything, you can take advantage of me, you know?”
“She’s truly grateful for your consideration, Sir.”
“But Shizuno is very refined. Is that what they call a ‘Yamato Nadeshiko’?”
“That is how she was raised.”
Why was he answering all of Edward’s questions himself?
It’s not like Shizuno particularly wanted to speak, but on the other hand, his attitude was irritating.
Her mask like expression saved her. It would not do to show her discomfort visibly, she thought cynically.
The conversation between her brother, making a good impression as an adherent to power, and a sociable Edward was ridiculously irritating.
Shizuno kept getting irritated.
“I wish a meteorite would fall from the sky.”
Cutting mutton with her knife, Shizuno could only comfort herself with worthless delusions.
Of course, there wasn’t a god that would grant those absurd desires.
But suddenly, the butler, Tatemura intruded upon the dinner.
“Milady’s school friend has arrived and is seeking an audience.”
Shizuno’s heart leapt.
Filling her mind was Moroha’s face.
Her hand holding the knife stopped, and her heart pounded. Her breath grew short and her mind blanked. What should she do? What should she do?
She couldn’t think of anything.
“Haimura-kun I suppose. He’s got a good nose, obstinate too. Politely remove him.”
“Ah…”

She reflexively opened her mouth to interject at her brother's order, but fell silent without saying anything.
It was already decided she would be studying abroad, how would she face him now?
The butler examined Shizuno for a while, but soon returned to the entryway.
"Farewell, Moroha. Get on well with Ranjou-san."
She closed her eyes, and mentally bid him farewell.
With her sense of sight completely cut off, she felt like she had been cast alone into the darkness.
But.
"Pardon meee."
She heard a boy's voice, feigning innocence.
She heard a large pane of glass shattering, and someone entering through it.
"W-why you… What are you thinking!? This is clearly breaking and entering, Haimura!"
She heard her brother's dismay, and his yell of anger.
This was nothing more than her sense of hearing.
However, as if by a shaft of light within the darkness, she felt she could see everything.
Her eyelashes shaking in fear an unease, she slowly opened her eyes.
With the setting sun at his back, Moroha stood aloof at the window.
"I just got a little angry. It's a youthful indiscretion. I won't ask for forgiveness."
Speaking brazenly, with a fearless smile, he took an outrageous attitude.
Shizuno was unintentionally moved to tears.
Even though she didn't want him to come, she was so moved that he had.
Shizuno's feelings couldn't lie about that, even if she tried.
"Just in case, what did you come here for?"
While rudely twirling his knife, Edward asked as if inquiring about tomorrow's weather.
"I came to tell you your eyes are too bad and you'll be mocked if you keep on like this."
"Oh? Well I can't let that happen, what do you mean?"
"Shizuno's a normal student, not as impressive a Black Mage as you think. If you take her back under your sponsorship, I'm sure there'll be rumours that you have a bad eye for people."
"However, I have my own thoughts, and I can see Shizuno is impressive."
"I'm telling you you're wrong, after all-"
Shizuno started.
She guessed his plan.
"You can't say that! Your life will be utterly ruined!"
Moroha didn't listen to her calls to stop.
With the huge evening sun at his back, he spoke arrogantly.

“The one that defeated that Nine-headed hydra was me. Me alone. Shizuno was just lying there then.”
As he finished, Shizuno covered her face with her hands.
“Haimura! Are you calling yourself an S rank now of all times!?”
Her brother spat as he ranted.
“I don’t care. I’m me. Haimura Moroha. But, I’ll take responsibility for what I say.”
Moroha answered with serious eyes.
“Do… do you understand what you’re saying? What you’re doing…?”
Shizuno frantically pleaded.
Becoming an S rank would mean.
Moroha would throw off his peaceful lifestyle that he always wanted.
Reigning among the strongest meant that lots of hopes, desires and lives would be placed on his shoulders, that he’d always be fighting battles worse than death.
“I know, I’m ready for it.”
“Why would you go that far, for someone like me!?”
“You don’t get it. It’s because it’s for you that I can.”
Moroha scratched his head.
An inexpressible joy and delight filled Shizuno’s chest.
“I… I… I should go to hell…”
Her beloved was sacrificing his life to help her, and she was this happy.
She couldn’t be forgiven. She was sinful.
She was happy, she suffered, she couldn’t supress her tears any more.
“You’re an idiot… It’s not like it’d be our final farewell… We’d just be separated by a few dozen thousand kilometres… We were separated by death, but we met again, didn’t we…? Compared to that, this is nothing…”
“Listen up, I said that I barely have any memories of my past life, didn’t I? The current Shizuno is everything to me, I don’t want to be separated from you. Do you? We can split hairs for as long as you like, just answer whether you want to be with me, yes or no?”
Moroha stretched his arm out straight.
He looked only at Shizuno, he stretched his arm out to her alone.
“I’m tired of hearing about positions and circumstances, but I haven’t heard what you want.”
He’d gone that far, said that much, Shizuno couldn’t hold herself back any more.
She unfastened her hair and shook it free.
And then cried, as if her throat would tear.
“I want to be with you! The last life, this life and the next, I always want to be with you!”
“Then come with me!”
Invited by her beloved, she leapt from her brother and ran.
Jumping into Moroha’s arms.

She yielded herself, to the warmest place in the world, to the place that thawed her frozen heart.
“Haimuraaa! Are you going to kidnap my sisteeer!?”
It spurred her brother’s anger and he threw vitriol at Moroha.
“You can talk big like an elder brother, I’m just the one your sister yearns for.”
Moroha stuck his tongue out and replied before picking Shizuno up lightly into a princess carry and taking her away.
They left the tombstone-like house, passed through the stifled garden and went out onto the road.
Taking her away from everything that bound her.
At about the same time, a sports car careened from the side. The flashy metallic blue body clashed against the air, tinged with the setting sun as it seemed to slice through the dusk.
“Nii-sama, here!”
Satsuki’s face appeared from the passenger window, beckoning them.
Clad in white prana, still carrying Shizuno, he leapt onto the car’s roof with God Speed Link.
It was like a movie – no, it was a difficult escape scene even for a movie.
Shizuno’s mind was free.
She’d endured for fifteen years, and finally been set free.
“Ah ha.”
A voice leaked from her mouth.
“Did you… just…”
Moroha’s eyes widened at it.
That was right.
“Ah ha, u fu fu, ah ha ha ha ha ha ha.”
Shizuno, said to have a mask like expression, raised her voice in laughter.
And it wasn’t just one laugh. Even as she buried her face in Moroha’s chest and tried to resist, her laughter kept gushing forth.
“Right. Keep holding on like that so you’re not shaken off.”
Nodding at her beloved with a smile, she clung with all her might to his broad chest.
Her hair fluttering in the roaring wind atop the car soothed her heart.
She didn’t look back at her rapidly retreating house.
The chairman, Tadanori was trembling in rage.
A cold wind blew in mockingly through the huge hole in the broken window.
Born to the Urushibara family, a prodigy that had never experienced discomfort, for the first time in his life, he experienced ‘humiliation’.
Because of that brat, Haimura Moroha.
“Sir Edward, I have a request.”
Tadanori spoke darkly as his complexion went passed flushed and darkened.
“Oh, what would that be?”
Still eating, Edward asked back, feigning ignorance.

“Put down the criminal that took my sister and retrieve her. Under the White Knight Order’s laws, Saviours that violate the laws should be executed. Though he may be a student, there’s no room for interpretation.”
He implicitly asked for Edward to kill Moroha.
“I don’t mind, but,” Edward’s nerves were also not normal, as he answered calmly, “being an S rank, if I should fight in another country, that itself is an intervention. Are you acknowledging that, Tadanori?”
“Of course. I’m part of the management in the Japanese branch. I will use that authority and officially request aid.”
“In that case, I’ll be back soon.”
Wiping his mouth, Edward relaxedly stood.
When he finished, his smile had changed.
From that of a sociable gentleman, to that of a lion.
His body was coated in prana, famed as the strongest on Earth.
Something was written in that expression.
‘That’s just what I thought.’

Chapter 6 – The Origin

The sports car roared along the road towards the foot of the mountain from the chairman's house.
The artistically sharp metallic blue body shot along the road like a bullet.
It was a Mazda RX7 FC3S.
Its engine had even been exchanged with its successor's, the FD's 13B-Rew engine.
The highly balanced machine, making a mockery of machine's twenty years older, descended the ridge with the gentle engine sound characteristic of rotary engines.
Choosing the one corner on the twisting road, it shot through, passing in a near straight line.
The driving with such grip was what could worsen the tyres.
The co-efficient of friction of the tread was pushed to the limits, with the perfect distribution of weight.
If you were looking on from a gallery, your breath would stop at a car being able to travel so fast.
In the driver's seat, exhibiting precise handling, delicate control of the acceleration, smooth gear changes, and perfect braking was none other than the ten year old Maya.
Her visibility through the windscreen was like she was on a roller coaster.
Satsuki had gone completely pale, sitting in the passenger seat."
"H-hey… don't you think we're going a little fast…? And it's a little late, but do you even have a licence…?"
She looked at the driver's seat, shuddering.
Snuggly sat within the hard racing seat, she could only feel uneasy.
She was scared and couldn't see the speedometer.
While daringly pressing down on the accelerator, Maya answered.
"You can't get a licence at ten, teehee."
"Hii."
Satsuki gripped the handle with both hands.
"It's okay, I've driven a lot thanks to Mari-oneechan, so I'm used to this."
The principal and she sure had some unexpected skills and hobbies.
"Saviours can't ignore road laws, can they…?"
"It's a skill to help in emergency situations, so there was an exception made."
Satsuki once more realised the outrageousness of the organisation she belonged to.
"C-couldn't you a-at least s-slow down a little?"
"If I do, Sir Edward will catch up."
"But if we have an accident, it won't matter. Drive safelyyy."
"If I don't hit anything, I am driving safely, teehee."
"No more. I want to go hooome."

So now, even though they were going home, Satsuki screamed with teary eyes.
“I love this thrill, teehee.”
“You speed freak little giiiirrl!”
She didn’t pay attention to that either.
On the roof, still embracing strongly, Moroha and Shizuno were watching the surroundings attentively.
“It would be nice if Edward didn’t chase us like this…”
Moroha himself didn’t believe his wishful thinking.
Eventually, a thirst for blood welled up from in front of them to the left.
Just as fast as the roaring car, a knife, shining green came flying at them.
Deadly accurate, it punctured the rear-left wheel and burst it.
It was a rear wheel drive, so it lost balance as if it was suddenly missing half its body, going in to a violent spin. Going at such a speed, the backlash when you lost control was huge.
At this rate, they’d go through the guard rail and tumble down the mountain!
“The chains of hell bind all dead, with no release…”
Atop the roof, Moroha spelled out a Bind uncommonly fast.
Jet black chains, braided from mana stretched out from his left hand, wrapping around a conspicuous tree.
At the same time, his right hand let off prana as he bored holes in the roof with his fingers and held on.
Moroha was using chains to fasten the massive lump of metal that the spinning car had become and control it with his own slender arms.
The chain tightened, and put a huge weight on his arm that felt like it would tear it off.
“Arrgh!”
Letting out a roar like a beast, Moroha mustered his Titan Strength Link.
Gritting his teeth as if to bite into prey, he finally brought the heavy car to a stop.
Using Light Techniques and Dark Arts, he’d forcibly held it down and saved everyone from the spin.
He checked that the car had completely stopped and dispersed the chains of mana.
The burning smell of the tyre rubber that had been shredded onto the road filled his nose.
“If it hadn’t been you, that would have been the end…”
Clinging to his chest, Shizuno spoke with a displeased face.
“I told you not to go so faast.”
“Whaa, I’m dizzy.”
Satsuki and Maya shakily opened the doors and got out.
Seeing that everyone was safe, Moroha jumped down from the roof while holding Shizuno.

Putting Shizuno on her own feet, he glared towards where the knife had come from.
Appearing in their path from the trees was AJ, Angela Johnson.
No longer in that helmeted outfit.
She was in a British style maid outfit, with a strange double-bladed sword.
Precisely because it was surreal, it brought about a dangerous, destructive atmosphere.
Shizuno, Satsuki and Maya's bodies stiffened.
"Were you trying to kill us?"
Amongst them, Moroha protested without a hint of fear.
"It would have been an unfortunate accident."
The beautiful woman's threat held an indescribable force.
"Edward's plan?"
"No, it's my own revenge."
"You can't hate me that much, can you?"
"Why you…"
AJ's eyes sparkled with rage as she suddenly ripped off the front of her outfit.
Completely exposing her cleavage down to her navel.
Atop her ivory white skin, were several bruises snaking over her.
"It's the mark of my defeat, carved by your Dark Art."
It was two days since that fight, and even a White Iron's high regeneration hadn't removed the marks.
"I can't show such an unsightly figure, so I couldn't serve in Sir Edward's bedroom."
So perhaps *that* was why she was filled with such a thirst for blood.
"You're the one that attacked me, you've not got room to talk."
Moroha took it in stride, and pushed that feeling away.
But, if she wouldn't move, they'd have to force through.
Moroha was burning in white prana, and AJ was burning in green prana.
It was a hair trigger situation.
And then.
"Geez. I just said to watch them. You're a bad girl, aren't you, An?"
Together with a calm voice, a man appeared, bringing them further into the coals.
It went without saying, this was Sir Edward Lampard.
He had most likely ran after them, but there was no sign of sweat at all.
"To think the head of the English branch would come all the way out here for us."
Moroha snapped on guard.
There was a master White Iron in front of them, and an S rank monster behind them.
Even Moroha would grow serious in this situation.
"I couldn't let you have your say and then just run off."
"Are you that attached to Shizuno?"

“We want Dark Saviours so much, we could fill three volumes with it, but I doubt you want to hear about our problems, do you?”
That was completely correct.
“I just don’t intend to hand over Shizuno, that’s all.”
At his side, Shizuno’s face reddened slightly at his firm declaration.
“And I just want to take her back to England. That’s all.”
The corners of Edward’s mouth lifted like a lion.
It was easy to understand, a conflict of interests.
In which case.
“If you defeated a Metaphysical alone and are claiming to be S rank, then you can take her back from me by force. You should be able to, right?”
Again, Edward was exactly right…!
“So, An. You keep those three alive. Alright?”
“…Yes, my lord.”
At Edward’s repeated order, AJ regretfully, but still respectfully assented.
She glared once more with eyes that seemed to burn with a dark fire at Moroha, before diverting her gaze as if uninterested.
She focussed solely on the other three.
Moroha couldn’t help them.
Sir Edward didn’t move his gaze for even an instant, fixing it on Moroha.
Going after AJ would be the end, Edward would cut him down from behind.
It was a bitter decision he couldn’t avoid.
“…Satsuki.”
“Got it, Nii-sama, leave it to me.”
With just a word, and understanding passed between them, she would try and protect Shizuno and Maya.
From the resistance in the park, Satsuki wouldn’t measure up to AJ, but there was no other choice.
He just had to believe in her.
He could only hope that Shizuno and Maya would support with Dark Arts.
Then, defeat Edward as quickly as possible, return and knock down AJ.
Even Moroha couldn’t guarantee he would win against one of only six S rank Saviours in the world.
However, he couldn’t make those complaints.
Thus, the battle appeared to be split into two.
Moroha vs. Edward.
Satsuki, Shizuno and Maya vs. AJ.
To concentrate on his own fight, and to avoid accidentally bringing the others into it, Moroha moved the battlefield to within the trees.
“You kill-joy, worrying about the surroundings. I’ll go along with it.”
Being a gentleman in word alone, Edward answered the invitation.
Once they were far enough away, they faced each other again.
Within the dark trees, shaded from the evening sun.
The evergreen trees were steeped in twilight, dyed a deep red.

An ominous location for the fight to the death that seemed to be about to occur.
“Come… Saratiga.”
Moroha poured prana into the tag already in his hand.
His beloved sword quietly formed, enveloped in an aura that looked like white fire.
“That’s a nice sword. You can tell it cuts at a glance, and if you were to polish it up a little, it might even rank with that demon sword that the Man-eater has, I can feel its worth. Mine’s a bit of a shabby piece in comparison… look, don’t be disappointed, will you?”
Looking like he was having child-like fun, he thrust forward his right hand, holding his ID Tag.
“Charara, chachachachacha, charara♪”
And then, as he hummed, his sword manifested as if he were drawing it from a scabbard.
Huge.
That was the word the two handed sword impressed upon you first.
He took it out like a toy as he hummed, but it was a ridiculous thing.
The massive sword was coated with Edward’s prana, and the violet that should have been noble somehow seemed ominous and like the burning of an evil will-o’-wisp.
White Knight. Lionheart. The Model Image. Lampard the Rampart.
It was a suitable weapon for the Lord Edward, a living legend holding these pseudonyms.
Just unsheathing it seemed to cause the temperature to drop.
“What’s with that ‘don’t be disappointed’?”
To relieve the pressure, Moroha put his right foot forward slightly.
His chest was raised triumphantly, the long sword held in his right hand.
It was a stance fixed in his body, but Moroha’s heart had sharpened it, making it a natural posture.
“Dan, dadadada, da, da, da, da, dadada♪”
Edward readied his sword in both hands too.
He was still humming the music that sounded like it was from a game.
It was a stubbornly joking attitude, but there wasn’t a single gap visible in his stance.
It was as if it raised his fighting spirit, heightened his concentration and put him in a particular mind-set.
To preserve the tone, Moroha kept his stance firmly.
The two’s prana swelled, filling the space between the trees with cold.
As if hit by it, the birds took flight.
At that sound.
“Hah!”
“Dadadan♪”
The two of them charged forward like a shot, exchanging a slash.

The bright white trail of light left by Moroha’s longsword and the noble violet left by Edward’s large sword mixed together right in the centre, colliding.
The clash of iron that rang out was a belated gong to start the fight.
All expression vanished from Moroha’s face, merely swinging his sword as if he were a machine to just cut people down.
His specialty slash from the shoulder. A splendid reverse slash. A horizontal slice at the torso, and back, a vertical slash down.
He attacked relentlessly, sparing no breath.
His sword was smaller than his opponents, but its manoeuvrability was helpful for the amount of attacks.
“How fast! And sharp!”
Edward had room to laugh as he parried the consecutive attacks.
The larger sword’s manoeuvrability wasn’t good, but its length was much longer than usual. The flat of the blade could act as a shield, obstructing Moroha’s slashes.
As the swords clanged together, the white and purple prana sparked off of each other.
“Are you going to just keep artlessly swinging like this?”
Still with his lion-like smile, Edward provoked him.
“Aren’t you calm? Not worried about those girls?”
“You’re pushy for a Six Head, aren’t you? Can’t win without psychological warfare?”
“You too, don’t be miserly, you won’t beat me without showing your trump card, you know?”
Edward implicitly told him to fight with Dark Arts too.
“I’m not enough of an idiot to show you my trump card while you’re waiting for it.”
“Ah well, then I guess I’ll show you my technique first.”
Breaking the ice, Edward took his sword in his right hand and brandished it.
It was like a telegraphed punch in boxing. It was a poor stance, begging to be attacked. Showing gaps asking to be hit.
Moroha was suspicious, but boldly attacked.
Faster than Edward, sharper, more manoeuvrable, he slashed diagonally.
Visiting an attack on him from ahead.
“I don’t care what you’re planning, I’ll just obliterate you from in front.”
So he put even more prana within the sword and raised its destructiveness even more.
Ancestral Arts Light Technique, Venus.
Saratiga’s blade shone all the more.
“Nice! Even tempted the theory doesn’t change, your swordsmanship is truly straightforward. I like it.”
Edward applauded it, and then performed a shocking act.
He reached out his left hand, and suddenly caught Moroha’s slash.

A condensed purple light shone in his palm, completely blocking the sword circulating destructive prana.
“Wha…”
Moroha was lost for words from shock.
With no consideration, the attack Edward had prepared earlier swung down.
Whether escaping or blocking, Moroha’s sword was still captured.
As the huge attack that seemed it would crush him approached, just before it impacted, Moroha kicked out with his left foot.
His toes hit at the base of Edward’s left hand, hitting right in the gap between the radius and ulna. With how the human body was made, his grip loosened, and at that moment, Moroha pulled back his sword.
He immediately dashed backwards.
The intense blade of wind dashed over him as he went to escape the trajectory of the swing… but, he didn’t make it in time. The huge tip of the sword sliced through his combat uniform and lightly into his skin.
A vertical line of blood spurted forth.
Edward’s sword was strengthened with Venus too.
Prana refined into absolute destructive power was poured into the sword, and rampaged in Moroha’s body. Internal damage was a secondary effect of Venus.
Moroha had used Diamond Skin Link and expelled the remnants of Edward’s prana, avoiding a deep wound in his body.
He’d avoided further troubles, but that didn’t change the reality that he’d taken a blow.
“If you’d stopped at being a C rank, that would have been the match, I guess you’re not such a small fry.”
Edward ostentatiously waved his left hand around.
The strength of the prana condensed in that palm only made Moroha shudder…
That was the reason that Moroha was shocked at him blocking the attack with his left hand.
He wasn’t shocked into silence at something unprecedented like blocking a sword bare-handed.
No matter what happened, he wouldn’t be surprised, his heart would beat and he would attack. But that wasn’t the case.
Precisely because he wasn’t unsurprised and understood, Moroha was shocked at him blocking a blow with his full force behind it.
It wasn’t as Edward had said, but if he was a B rank, then his arm would have been cut off.
That defensive technique was called Sun.
A high class technique of Diamond Skin Link, that didn’t protect the entire body, but condensed the user’s prana to protect a point, and that point alone, even as it was living flesh, would be an absolute defence.

How much of your body you could cover with the condensed prana was determined by strength and skill.
Moroha could currently only cover a fingertip.
It was that difficult a technique, and yet Edward had just covered his entire palm.
It was an astoundingly skilled Light Technique, so Moroha couldn't supress his shudder.
"Daran! Daadadadadadadada, daadada, dadada, dadada♪"
Edward's humming raised in tension as he attacked overbearingly.
To cover the distance Moroha had opened up in his jump, he charged with his sword overhead.
"Formless blade, invisible sword, come forth, Render!"
To intercept the attack, Moroha quickly spelled out a Dark Art.
It was the first step art, Fracturing Gust.
"Now you're talking!"
Edward didn't move to avoid the fangs closing in on him.
He took it head on, appearing defenceless.
Moroha felt a chill run down his back.
As the fangs sunk into Edward, the Fracturing Gust dispersed.
That scene chilled his heart and as he retreated, he launched the next Dark Art.
"Fire discriminates not against good nor evil as it burns and purifies with ferocious mercy."
The first step Dark Art, Flare.
The crimson flames vaporised the underbrush as they snaked towards Edward, and of course, vanished.
Closing in on Moroha's eyes, the large sword struck forth.
Moroha somehow blocked it with the sword in his right hand.
Earth shattering pressure beat down on him from above as he withstood it with Titan Strength Link.
At the same time, his left hand spelled out a third Dark Art.
From nearly point blank range, the Flare would burn Edward… but the second and third both vanished like mist as they touched his purple, flame-like prana.
"What kind of trick is this? Don't be stingy and tell me."
"It's nothing big, I'm just using Moon."
Edward smiled like a lion that had cornered its prey, answering as he pushed on his sword.
A Light Technique Moroha didn't know.
It wasn't taught at Akane Academy, and no-one in the Strikers used it. He hadn't seen it in the dreams of Flaga either. It was possible that it wasn't that Flaga hadn't used it, but not needed to.
"Oh, have you not studied enough? How naughty."
Edward read Moroha's expression and jokingly teased him.

At the same time, he hit a second and third time, so Moroha struggled to endure.
Edward changed his tone to a teacher's.
"It's a high class Diamond Skin Link skill that can be combined with Sun. If Sun is a skill that defends by compressing space, Moon is a skill that defends by compressing time."
In other words, it was a technique that, for a mere instant, made you completely invulnerable.
"Doesn't seem practical."
No one used it.
"Unlike Light Techniques, Dark Arts are slow, so if you watch carefully and calculate the timing, it's okay."
"A good lesson."
Thinking of the risks when you failed, normally you wouldn't want to try is. Edward's courage and skill was enough like that of a monster to make you laugh.
Moroha thought cynically as his face warped.
Yes, as they exchanged dozens of blows, the two swordsmen exchanged nonsense.
This was certainly a mind-set from their high skill with the sword.
In other words, Moroha was an extremely high class White Iron. He didn't realise it himself, but he was actually among the foremost within the Japanese branch.
Despite this, Edward was yet another step ahead.
"If I don't take risks myself, it'll just drag out…"
It was annoying, but Edward's initial advice was right.
Moroha would have to show more skill too.
"I'll go ahead and use my trump card too…"
Moroha purposely proclaimed as he held his sword in a reverse grip and held it behind his back.
It wasn't a manga or anime, so it was a completely meaningless show.
If he could get him to hesitate even an instant-
"I said I liked it straightforward too!"
Edward didn't mind the meanings and thrust his sword forwards, straight on as if to crush.
Moroha sharpened, tightly inhaling a breath.
He condensed prana into his left index finger.
And with that shining glint within his finger, stopped the huge sword.
Ancestral Arts, Light Technique, Sun.
The meaningless reverse grip was because he'd read Edward's personality and was inviting a frontal attack.
If you could guide the sword, you could even stop it with an index finger.
"If I'd been a little off, I'd have lost my fingers…"
It wasn't really a point of pride. Even if he couldn't cover his entire palm with prana, there were several ways he could use it defensively.

Edward let out an impressed whistle as he back stepped.
“Think you’re getting away.”
When Moroha blocked the sword, he’d already begun to swing his sword, still in the reverse grip.
Drawing out a straight bright white line of light.
The sword tip hit the lower part of Edward’s chest… and he escaped backwards with only a slight wound.
“Tch.”
His sword was slower than normal because of the strange hold.
A horizontal line of blood spurted from Edward, but that was all, the wound was shallow.
In any case, with this they had each gotten a hit.
Edward leapt back and Moroha didn’t chase after him, opening up some distance.
There was a little over ten metres between them.
But the tension of battle hadn’t relaxed yet.
Moroha corrected his hold on his sword without letting his guard down, and cautiously, cautiously breathed in preparation.
His entire body was covered in a cold sweat.
Terrified, going out on a limb, he’d finally gotten a blow in, but it wasn’t a telling blow.
It wasn’t worth it.
If it hadn’t been for Satsuki and Shizuno, he would have thrown shame and dignity to the winds and ran.
“Well, outstanding, Moroha.”
In contrast, Edward was still relaxed.
Looking down at his own wound, he traced it with his left hand.
He stared at his palm, dyed with blood.
“My blood’s red too, it’s been a while since I’ve known.”
He smiled innocently like a child.
“Whoops, did that sound like I was bragging?”
Moroha didn’t answer.
“I’m not. Being looked at like a monster all the time means I sometimes I forget like I’m human too.”
Moroha didn’t answer.
But he started.
It was hard to admit, but he couldn’t think of it as someone else’s problem, it sounded unpleasant.
Edward was still just saying what he wanted and didn’t seem to care what Moroha thought. Still speaking like a teacher.
“Yeah, being able to draw blood from *me* is magnificent. I’ll raise you to an A.”
He self-importantly judged Moroha’s fighting style.
“But maybe you’re still far from S?”
“Quit your prattling.”

Moroha angrily thrust out his left index finger.
“Trace.”
He began spelling a long Dark Art.
Different from earlier, there was plenty of distance, so there was enough time to trace a better phrase.
Edward’s Moon seemed like it could only be used for an instant, but that instant had completely supressed Moroha’s first step Dark Arts.
But what about his exceptionally strong third step?
Would that be supressed in an instant? If it couldn’t, surely the remnants would burn Edward.
“There exists purgatory in the underworld, and fields of fire in the corporeal world.
Fire discriminates not against good nor evil nor chaos-”
Moroha wrote out his specialty third step Dark Art, Incinerate.
He concentrated, to finish it even an instant before Edward and his sword reached him.
But.
“See, that won’t get you an S rank.”
Still with his lion like smile, Edward licked his lips.
He was approximately ten metres away, off in the distance.
But suddenly, he was in front of Moroha, with his sword raised.
Moroha wasn’t able to grasp when he closed the distance.
He’d been watching without even blinking, but it was almost like there was a gap in his consciousness, letting him approach.
Ancestral Arts Light Technique, Alkaid.
The ultimate secret within the seven types of God Speed Link, a method of Shukuchi.
By the time he noticed, it was too late and the massive sword was approaching.
He stopped his chanting, stopped his spelling.
He held his sword in both hands and tried to block it, but the blade was repelled.
With Titan Strength, his sword was thrown into the air. His lungs were crushed.
Moroha had been focussed on weaving his Dark Art, so was completely too slow in responding. He couldn’t put the strength in his body with how he was standing.
He’d only seen it once, but Moroha cursed his carelessness.
Edward swung his sword like a baseball bat and hit his now defenceless stomach.
Moroha used all of his prana to protect himself, focussing it solely on his torso.
It was a slight adlib between Diamond Skin Link and Sun.
At the moment of impact, white and purple light fought against each other and sparked.

The amazing strike hit him in the pit of his stomach.
It was done with Titan Strength Link so he couldn't simply withstand it.
Moroha's body shot off like a cannonball.
He hit and battered down the trees in his path, but that didn't stop his momentum.
If he hadn't immediately used Diamond Skin Link, his spine would have been shattered.
He finally hit the sixth tree and stopped, bouncing down onto the ground.
"Hah… hah… hah…"
Rolling over, Moroha breathed heavily.
The numbness from the impact still pervaded his body and he couldn't properly move.
Somehow moving his left hand, he stroked at his bloodstained chest, checking on it.
It was painful. One or maybe two of his ribs might have been broken.
Even so, if it wasn't Moroha. That attack would have killed him, or at least grievously wounded him.
"Shall we end it already?"
Edward spoke candidly, his sword over his shoulder.
He walked slowly from where he'd blown Moroha away, giving him time to think.
He was saying that he'd let him off.
Of course, that was followed by saying that he'd take Shizuno after that…
He couldn't recover from the numbness, he couldn't stand, and Moroha grit his teeth.
"Gentlemen need to pay respect to warriors. If you won't give up, I can't be pathetic either."
He slowly stepped forward.
When he reached Moroha's side, Edward would no doubt mercilessly strike him down.
How many steps were left?
Twenty steps? Fifty?
That was how long Moroha had to live.

AJ, or Angela, was anxious.
Her opponents were merely three girls, she was enraged to be having so much trouble with them.
The White Iron, Satsuki was already covered in wounds.
A D rank who could only open the five gates on each hand, each leg and her forehead shouldn't be able to give a match to an A rank like Angela…
This was absurd.

Her limbs were clad in a pure gold prana that Angela had never seen before, and she couldn't just pulverise through her defences. It was enough to make her think she was out of form, in other words, Satsuki held comparable power and toughness to Angela.
The ragged girl looked like a single push would make her collapse, but there was no response from her.
"Doesn't it hurt? Aren't you in pain? You've got to be right? Why are you still standing? Why won't you give up?"
Curious to the depths of her heart, Angela couldn't help but ask.
"Nii-sama will come running soon."
"You think Sir Edward will lose? Are you sane?"
"I'm sane. He promised long ago. My Nii-sama won't lose to anyone."
It was a logic against common sense.
Blind faith, on the border of fanaticism.
"I'll protect Urushibara, and Nii-sama will praise me."
Despite that, she couldn't laugh at Satsuki saying that with a fearless smile.
She could feel a quiet force from her.
It was hard to believe, but she was overawed by this lower rank.
"Oh? I want to be praised too, you know?"
Being protected by the stubborn girl, Shizuno launched an offensive Dark Art, limiting her movement.
It was a third step Dark Art that even B ranks would struggle with, but she was throwing them around like they were child's play.
Against a third step even Angela could take a fatal wound if she took them lightly.
In all actuality, Edward had only focussed on Moroha from the start.
However, it seemed they had made light of these Japanese boys and girls.
"I thought they would only be a distraction, but..."
Moment by moment, a cold feeling settled in Angela's heart.
To shake off that chill.
"Get too carried away, and I'll kill you."
Angela's bloodlust gushed forth even more strongly.
This was AJ's fighting spirit that would make even C rank Saviour's tremble.
But the girls didn't lose to it.
"Are you sure? Weren't you beloved Sir Edward's orders to 'keep us alive'?"
In fact, it was her that ended up being provoked.
Angela grit her teeth like a fighting dog.
"I warned you. I am a loyal woman, but I'll show you that I'm not my lord's puppet."
She took the two headed sword apart, into two swords.
She bent further forward, was more ferocious, sharper, taking a sword to her right and left.
Blinded by rage, Angela didn't notice that the lovely third girl had vanished at some point.

Edward’s slow death march continued towards where Moroha was, still numb and laid out on the ground.
“Don’t panic… there’s no point in panicking…”
Moroha still hadn’t given up.
On Shizuno, or on winning.
He mustered his strength and used all the prana he could to revitalise his body.
The white light he was clad in slowly began to dance boisterously.
He still hadn’t recovered from the attack.
Death was still approaching.
Extremely quiet and sluggish, it was an earnest match he was betting his life on.
At that moment.
“Hang in there, Moroha!”
A young cry split the air.
Moroha looked that way in shock.
It was Maya.
Avoiding the trees, pushing her way through the underbrush, working hard to go along the trackless path with her short legs.
“What a damper on the mood.”
Edward said, let down, thumping his sword on his shoulder.
However, his pace didn’t change at all, it didn’t slacken.
“This isn’t a battle someone of your level should interfere in, ‘Half asleep little witch’. Even if you’re a child, you’re a Saviour, so I don’t mind involving you. Do you get it? To put it frankly, you’ll get in Moroha’s way more than anything, so leave.”
He waved his hand as if to ward off a puppy.
“Help… the other two… not me…”
Moroha told her to pull back.
However, despite this, Maya didn’t stop, and shook her head.
“Shizuno-oneechan said to support you!”
That battle couldn’t be easy either.
They needed all the help they could get.
But their wholehearted desire was to help Moroha.
“Satsuki-oneechan said to tell you! She won’t forgive you breaking your promise!”
His promise.
Those words breathed live back into his heart, his soul, his very bones.
Even if he couldn’t see her, even if they were both in a fight to the death, Moroha knew it.
If he closed his eyes, he’d always be able to touch Satsuki’s heart.

Just as Moroha was worried, Satsuki would be worrying too.
So.
Whatever painful battles he face, whatever formidable enemies, however far they were separated, even if they were to be torn apart by the gods-
“I will win, and return to her…!”
Moroha held his sword.
Putting strength into both his hands.
And then rose, gritting his teeth.
Using the sword as a cane to stand with.
If his body didn’t want to move, his heart would.
“Aaaaahhhhhhh.”
A roar tore itself from his throat.
Spontaneously, prana blazed from his body.
Moroha was revived…!
“Hmm.”
Seeing that revival, Edward stopped dead.
His firm gait, that, by his own rules would not be swayed by anything, his eloquent resolve, stopped.
Hearing the ferocious roar from Moroha, who was normally quiet, he felt something.
Perhaps that was why he was an S rank.
Readying his massive sword, he watched Moroha’s transformation from where he was.
Moroha once more took his sword in his right hand and once more faced him head on as a swordsman.
“Thank you, Maaya. You were so much help.”
His body was in tatters, but his eyes held a wild light as he smiled fearlessly.
Something passed his mind. The other day, when she had visited his room and cheerfully proclaimed herself an express home delivery service.
“This is from me too.”
Maya held something reverently in front of her chest.
It was a strange, multi-faceted object, half transparent and holding a strange lustre.
He remembered seeing her with it the other day.
“It takes a while to raise it, I’m sorry to keep you waiting.”
As if releasing a bird back to the skies, Maya spread her arms and let go of the strange multi-faceted object.
As she released it, it rapidly expanded.
At a ridiculous speed, to a ridiculous scale, it steadily swelled up.
It widened.
As it swallowed the surroundings, it grew enough to envelop the mountain.
Suddenly, with a violent shaking, an intense drowsiness assaulted Moroha/
But after an instant, it vanished like a lie.
He remembered this illusion.

It was the drowsiness that assaulted him when he entered the arena.
Moroha felt it on his skin.
Now, this mountain was like the arenas, a different space.
That feeling was correct.
The barrier attached to the arenas, and the one that Maya had just attached to this mountain were the same.
A special Ancestral Art that only Maya alone could use. An Origin.
It shifted the phase, making the world half asleep, a barrier Dark Art.
Its name was Dream Stone Hedron.
Maya called loudly to him.
“But because it’s covering the entire mountain, it can’t shift the phase of living things. If you get hurt, that’s it!”
“That’s plenty.”
Without taking his eyes off of Edward, Moroha thanked her.
Maya was a clever girl. Her important task complete, she gave an angelic smile and ran away at full speed.
Yes, it was unmistakably important. He understood the reason Shizuno had sent her.
Edward’s own mockery was correct, he was human in form only, a true monster.
Just like that nine-headed hydra.
So to defeat him, a big technique like he’d used to defeat that would be necessary.
Naturally.
However, Kurikara for example had the force to destroy a huge shopping mall.
If he used it here, it would probably change the terrain. Completely gouging out the mountain. And the day the earth was destroyed, would harm those at the foot of the mountain, swallowing up crowds of people in rubble.
But, within the Dream Stone Hedron, he didn’t have to worry about the outside.
He didn’t need to hold back any more.
He didn’t need to hide anything either.
From here on out, he’d be at full power.
“Trace.”
Moroha began spelling out a long phrase with his left hand.
“You don’t learn.”
Edward had a disappointed expression.
His tall figure appeared to vanish, but he had moved instantaneously in front of Moroha with Alkaid and swung his large sword down.
There was not a single wasted movement, the king’s sword dropped.
With no way to escape, Moroha was cut in two.
Or so it appeared, it was nothing but an illusion, what Edward cut was Moroha’s afterimage!

Just like Alkaid, this was a technique derived from God Speed Link, crowned with the name of a star of the Plough.
A walking technique that left afterimages, Merak.
“You were the one that said circle round to counterattack from behind weren’t you? I quite agree.”
“Haha! A clever pretence, so the Dark Art was a lure!?”
That was wrong.
As he circled back, he completed the fifth line.
Though there was the likelihood it would act as a lure, it certainly wasn’t just a feint.
“The corrupt world is eternal, the horns sound, the time of judgement is now!”
The fires of hell.
The black flames, manifested by the Dark Art, dwelt in Moroha’s sword.
Yet more prana ran through the blade, multiplying with the mana.
The white and black fought, strengthening each other.
The fifth step Dark Art, Black Gehenna, multiplied with the Light Technique, Venus.
It was a technique Moroha himself had developed, only useable by him as he had two past lives.
Ancestral Art, Yin Yang.
With the Devil Conquering Black Sword that had defeated the hydra, Moroha leapt forward.
“So that’s you true trump card!?”
Looking back over his shoulder, Edward swung his sword like a tornado to meet his attack.
Sword met sword.
A clear, beautiful sound like a bell’s chime echoed around.
Moroha’s sword, sparking with white light and black flames had sliced through the middle of Edward’s sword like butter.
“Well, this is an issue…”
Now holding half a sword, Edward was dumfounded.
“Haaaaaahh!”
Moroha swung his sword back with no pause.
This would decide it.
It should have, it normally would have.
Moroha felt a hard resistance in his hands as he swung.
It cut. It certainly his.
At the moment of impact, Moroha released all the power from the blade, eye-searing white light and black flames ran amok.
Just the aftereffects were enough to ignite the trees, and dye the surroundings scarlet.
However.
When the gale of light and dark subsided, what was reflected in Moroha’s eyes was a silver armour.

It possessed both a solemnity and dignity, with a refined design.
The entire thing was decorated in patterns edged in gold.
It held a mysterious lustre and didn't look like any metal found on Earth.
Just as a favoured weapon could be brought back from a previous life, there was no reasoning saying it couldn't be something protective.
Clad in that dazzling armour, Edward had stopped Moroha's sword with his gauntlet.
The sword that had slain even a dreadnought hadn't even scratched the surface.
"And that's your true trump card then?"
Moroha understood.
The sword he cut in half was just a hunk of metal to Edward.
There was a reason he was the White Knight.
Arms of god's majesty that gave him the legend of invincibility.
An Origin.
That was this armour, Snow Capped Augustine.
"You did well. But it's over now. No one has wounded me when I'm like this."
"I couldn't let you have your say and then just run off. Right?"
Moroha threw back Edward's words.
"Ha ha ha, you're right!"
Edward wielded his half broken sword. Even so it was still an average size blade.
His humming rose even further in tension and you could imagine his lion-like grin underneath his helmet.
Moroha moved fast enough to leave afterimages and swung at his back.
But the armour was unharmed.
He placed an Incinerate in his sword and magnified it with prana. The aftershocks alone opened up large holes in the ground.
But the armour was unharmed.
He used a Yin Yang of Frozen Shade, attacking with a sword cursed with ice, planning to crack it with the sudden extreme temperature difference.
But the armour was unharmed.
His speed exploded, seeming to leave clones as he attacked near simultaneously from four directions.
But the armour was unharmed.
It was armour, so it should impede movement. Edward's movements dulled slightly.
That slight difference made him appear full of openings to Moroha, like a sandbag.
In the time Edward's sword cut the air once, Moroha had slashed three times.
No, his speed rose even further.
He attacked incessantly. No space even for breath between them.
Flash, flash, flash.

Unharmed, unharmed, unharmed.
Moroha's fierce attack was enough to defeat other saviours a hundred times over.
Perhaps because Edward was the opponent, it looked like he was going around in circles.
"Hahaa, it's useless! Useless, useless! I'm invincible!"
Edward roared with laughter, daringly spreading both arms and exposing himself defencelessly, making a display of his valour.
"If you were an invincible hero, you wouldn't re-incarnate!"
Moroha roared and once more traced a Black Gehenna, driving his black sword into his torso with all his might.
It had first cut Edward's sword, now the returning sword slashed at his armour.
This time, with everything put into one slash.
"Ha ha ha ha, it doesn't even itch!"
Perhaps because of the adrenaline, Edward laughed madly.
Those words were no lie. However, they were a faulty expression.
"You!"
At the same time as Moroha's roar.
A breaking sound assaulted his ears.
The sound of Moroha's all-out attack breaking a crack into Edward's armour.
The sound of that legend of invincibility being harmed.
Inside the helmet, that lion-like smile that had remained on Edward's face all throughout the battle, bent.
Edward was an S rank White Iron.
His existence itself mocked the concept of 'easy to attack, hard to defend'.
To go against this monster, Moroha would have to go against common sense too.
If Edward were to stand in his way with an absolute armour.
Moroha would only make his own peerless sword.
Throwing away nature, unbinding himself and running wild.
Gritting his teeth like bared fangs, roaring like a wild beast, like a creature that existed only to sate its hunger, he attacked and attacked and attacked.
Basic techniques, high class techniques, regardless of secrets, he attacked with all the Light Techniques and Dark Arts he had.
His adrenaline flowed strongly.
Good! Thanks to Maya's support he could end it without worrying about his surroundings, good!
Each blow rent the ground, gouging swathes out of the land and scattering it. Like a tiny natural disaster, changing the very landscape itself.
"…Raahh!"
Moroha screamed. Black flames dwelt in his sword.
They rode on his sword as he swung it with both hands at the White Knight.
At the moment of impact, an unpleasant jarring ran down the grip.

Many cracks ran up the blade, the sword finally unable to cope with the abuse.
But at the same time, a crack shot through the helmet like a falling star.
Visible through that crack, was Edward's true face.
He was smiling.
Not the smile of a lion drunk on the slaughter, but one of absolute joy at being able to meet the person he had been waiting for.
"You're one of us!"
Laughing loudly, he attacked with his broken sword.
"You're an S rank!"
Still laughing, he attacked with more and more blood curdling strikes that Moroha barely turned aside.
The heavy shock pulverised his sword as it returned to an ID tag, broken into fragments.
He was now unarmed, but he didn't mind the details.
Fighting like a wrathful demon, he gouged at the crack in Edward's helmet with his right index and middle fingers. Edward used the flat of his blade to shield against this and struck at Moroha, leaving it to his strength to throw him away.
He didn't pursue, he stood there imposingly, overcome with emotion and excitement.
"Our seventh comrade! Seven monsters out of eight billion! Only seven in this wide world! Even Metaphysicals are no match, you're a freak masquerading as a human! It was worth getting involved with Japan, you're just the man I hoped! Now! Why don't you ascend to solitude with us!?"
Proclaiming the logic of being a human in form only, he laughed loudly.
Taking the defensive and standing firm, Moroha replied.
"Quit your ranting!"
He roared like a lion.
Who was his comrade?
He'd made Shizuno cry.
He'd angered Moroha.
And now he was playing with words?
"Dance, dance, wings of the phoenix, as light as the fleeting sparks, unbind me from the yoke of gravity!"
He traced out Decrease Weight with his left hand and with both legs covered in prana, leapt.
Higher, higher, to the sky where no one other than he could reach.
Invading the red sky, ruled over by the setting sun, he looked down upon the earth as if he owned it.
It was the sight of gods.
An inviolable region that not even Edward could reach.
"I don't give a damn about rank! But…"
Moroha's mind flitted around.
Every day, complete, noisy, that he'd spent with Shizuno and Satsuki.

In the classroom, in the courtyard, in the arena, in the restaurant after training, all of it, all of it, all of it.
It was more than he deserved, he didn't want to lose it. So.
"I won't forgive… anyone who takes from meeeee!"
Moroha's roar shook the heavens.
"Trace."
His right hand drew out ancient magic characters.
Along with his rage, memories filled him from within his mind.
Pandora's Box was opened.

Mouth agape, Angela looked to the sky.
Satsuki and Shizuno were both also focussed on a point in the sky.
Of course, they had halted their fighting. Now wasn't the time for that.
While she had so much trouble with the two girls, a sense of unease had endlessly grown in Angela's chest.
It had finally been realised.
Borne fruit in an unimaginable way.
Suddenly. Truly suddenly, an absurd amount of mana surge overhead, filling the heavens.
Angela, Satsuki and Shizuno all suddenly looked to the sky.
And then, they witnessed it.
High in the distance, where none could reach, Moroha looked down aloofly from above.
And then, his proud use of a Dark Art.
No one could stop that technique now.
In the bloodstained sky, Moroha's aria echoed clearly.
Oh ice wolf, ender, lend me your breath, freeze them into a silence deeper than death.
Even the affluent perish through the providence of this world, an inevitable karma given by the gods.
As water flows downwards, take all life.
Show me a world that is still, as though time itself were frozen.
Show me the heights of beauty that none can destroy, where none who can destroy exist.
Angela's eyes froze, confirming the phrases Moroha had written.
One, two, three, four, five.
"A fifth step Dark Art…! What kind of person can use that kind of huge magic!?"
She shuddered while she looked up at the heavens.
From his skill in her match with him, she had felt that while he could use both Light Techniques and Dark Arts, he tended towards being a White Iron.
But it was still too early for Angela to shudder.
"There's more to it you know? That technique."
Shizuno looked up in ecstasy at Moroha, speaking as if intoxicated.
Even as Angela struggled to believe it, Moroha's aria did not end there.
I reject understanding, I desire only absolutes.
What unsightliness!
The weirdness of life gathering, writhing, spreading its stench, and multiplying.
I do not accept that, I will not understand it.

Hearing the voice roaring through the heavens, Angela finally could not stop shaking.
She was tormented by a fear as if she had been thrown out into the middle of winter with no clothing.
“I hadn’t heard that anyone other than Russia’s Lightning Empress could use an eighth step Dark Art!”
Moroha’s aria had already passed its eighth stanza.
But his lips still spun their curse.
“Stop already! Don’t destroy my reasoning!”
The complaints of the people of this world did not reach the heavens.
The Dragon King held no mercy for one who had trodden on its tail.
Moroha wouldn’t stop.
My desire is a vision of white,
My desire is a beautiful world of death,
My desire is for an enclosed world, where all ugliness is buried,
My desire is for all to stop, stop, stop.
Thirteen stanzas in total, Moroha traced and chanted.
In other words, this was a thirteenth step Dark Art.
An Origin, only Moroha’s.
A forbidden spell.
The White Knight Order would later name it.
Range of Absolute Zero, Cocytus.
“Sir Edward!”
As if she were pushed to move, Angela ran off.
Abandoning Satsuki and Shizuno, trampling her orders.
Running to aid her master, her hair streamed out behind her.
With a frantic expression, she went into the trees Edward had vanished into.
The sky’s colour had changed.
The sky had seemed endlessly red with the sunset, but it had been painted over in a pure white.
This was a technique a person used!?
The temperature had suddenly dropped. As if even the weather prostrated itself before that fiend.
Their breath came out white too.
Far from being snow, crystals of ice rained down, a dusting of diamonds.
As far as the eye could see, the ground was engulfed in frost, the trees were frozen.
The world was enclosed in white.
That, was the end.
Angela’s path, around where Edward should be, was even worse.
There was a localised, concentrated, multi-layered blizzard raging, shrouding everything.
“I give in! I give in! This is the first time I’ve felt such pleasure! I give in to it!”

She thought she could hear Edward’s laughter, stained with joy and madness, but the howling winds soon erased it, carrying it away on the snow.
The heavy wind, cold air and slicing hail made a wall in her path, she couldn’t help, could draw closer. It was an absolute barrier, thwarting even Angela, beyond normal people as she was.
She couldn’t imagine what it would be like in the middle of this world of death.
Ahead of her was sectioned off, as if the cold air, hail and snow had formed a coffin around it.
White, white, white, white, white, white, white, white, white, white, white, white.
It was all swallowed towards demise.
“Ahh… ahh… aaahhhh…”
Perhaps she had gone mad with despair and was seeing things.
She could see creatures of ice around, exulting in their world, dancing around.
It was hell.
This was without a doubt a frozen hell.
“It’s our loss! My lord admitted it too! So please, lay down your arms!”
Angela cried to the heavens, but of course, her voice didn’t carry.
Moroha had entrusted himself to gravity, and detachedly descended, disappearing to somewhere.
The sky was covered in a bright white, and filled with a sense of loss, as if they were forsaken by the gods.
“Please… please…”
Angela’s determination was exhausted, and she collapsed there on her knees, falling on the snow covered ground.
“Damn you Urushibara… Damn you Tadanori… You shouldn’t have fallen for such cheap words… I should have warned against it… That wasn’t an opponent we could take lightly…!”
Her heart broke, forcing remonstrations of their foolishness and her regrets from her mouth.
If they had known he was a Grimoire Holder, would they have so easily interfered?
It was a complete defeat.
Angela’s tears of regret continued to melt the snow as she seemed to bow towards the coffin of snow her master was enclosed in.

Moroha and the three others walked down the mountain through the snow.
There probably wasn’t going to be anyone following them now, so they were relaxed.

Satsuki was exhausted from protecting Shizuno from AJ, and was sleeping on Moroha's back.
Clinging to her beloved brother, she seemed happy as she slept.
She was proud, and actually had plenty of reason to be.
Maya was a contrast.
She sniffled as she tottered onwards.
The beloved car they'd came with was now buried in a tremendous snowfall and they couldn't retrieve it.
"The barrier will go by tomorrow, right? Then the snow will go back too, right? So the car will be safe too."
Moroha tried to cheer her up, but her expression didn't clear.
"AJ broke the back wheel. And it's too much for it to be safe after that spin, the body is unstable. That was before the barrier, so it's beyond repair."
"Complain to the English branch, get them to give you a new one."
"It was an old car, so it's not in production anymore. There aren't many second-hand ones in good condition either."
"…That's a disaster."
"It was a famous car Jeremy praised on TV, he said it wouldn't lose to the more expensive Mitsubishi GTO, the FD."
"Ah, I see, I see."
Maya's complaints were those of an enthusiast, so he couldn't follow, but he felt sorry for her, so consoled her anyway.
He didn't even ask who on Earth Jeremy was.
"I'm sad, and when I imagine Mari-oneechan being angry, I'm even sadder."
"I'll apologise with you."
Moroha said apologetically, but Maya softly shook her head.
"It's not your fault, it's the English Head's fault. But…"
She looked up at him and gave an innocent smile.
"It's good you killed Sir Edward."
"I didn't kill him.
Moroha replied with his eyes half open at her saying such scary things with a smile.
He'd put him in ice, but in about an hour, the localised blizzard would stop, and AJ would rescue him. It would probably take time to melt from outside, but there were ways to survive using Light Techniques, so that immortal monster should have room to spare.
"I was sure you'd take revenge for it."
"In fact, if there's a way to kill him, I want to know…"
Moroha dejectedly responded to Maya's morbid joke (or so he wanted to think).
What kind of a cheat was that armour that had taken a full force Kurikara to even scratch? Maybe ten thousand would have done it, but he would use one every ten seconds, so with three thousand six hundred seconds in an hour- ah forget it, it's a boring calculation.

He couldn’t defeat him, so he’d just immobilised him, Moroha had no way of doing anything more.
“Let’s just call it a draw due to injury.”
“Mgh, I guess so, he *is* one of the S rank Six Heads.”
Maya begrudgingly agreed and this time gave a truly angelic smile.
It was a very nice smile.
Moroha was hooked into smiling too, and looked at the snowy scene.
He didn’t remember it clearly. But in his previous life, Shuu Saura had used that forbidden spell and destroyed a part of the world, turning it into hell.
Today, Moroha had been able to not worry about his surrounding because of Maya’s Dream Stone Hedron. Without her barrier, the town would be forevermore buried in snow.
He wouldn’t be able to look upon it this freely.
“What would have happened if I was alone…?”
Just the same as he thanked Satsuki for drawing off AJ, he thanked Maya, acting behind the scenes, from the bottom of his heart.
And the, he turned his head back to the third girl.
She was walking behind them, a little slower, staring up brightly at the white expanse as she walked.
Her hands were clasped behind her, her steps light.
And above all, there was a beautiful smile on her face.
It wasn’t mask like at all.
“What are you smiling about?”
Moroha teasingly spoke, taking his revenge for what she normally did.
“Am I making that strange a face?”
“You are, you are.”
“I see… I can’t help it, after all…”
Shizuno answered with a smile.
“You’ll be keeping me from today, won’t you? Aren’t you happy?”
Moroha’s entire body froze.
“How did that happen!?”
“Well I can’t go back to the Urushibara family, can I? You took me from them, almost like we eloped, right? So I want you to take responsibility, I don’t think there’s anything wrong with expecting a man to be reliable. In exchange, I’ll do my best to learn how to take care of a house-”
“Wait wait wait!”
Moroha interrupted Shizuno’s expressionless, well thought out explanation.
She fell silent, but steadily stared at him with questioning eyes.
Moroha felt sweat drip down him.
“Munya, Nii-sama… if you’re a man, take responsibility…”
Satsuki let out some timely sleep talk, almost as if she was actually awake.
Actually, he wanted to ask what kind of dream she was having.
Maya had a shameless face, pretending she was a child so she didn’t know.
Moroha prepared himself and answered truthfully, with no word of a lie.
“…Honestly, I hadn’t thought that far.”

He’d gotten angry and kidnapped Shizuno, spoken sharply at her family and eventually rampaged.
“The worst you could say, isn’t it?”
Moroha couldn’t refute her.
Mentally in tears, calculations were going around in his head, calculating the cost-benefits of the salary he got from the strikers, the money he sent to his adoptive parents, and a girl’s life.
Moroha looked more exhausted than fighting Edward, and Shizuno spoke.
“It’s a joke.”
It wasn’t a full-faced smile, but one that just made dimples at the sides of her mouth.
It was an annoying face that Moroha knew well, but couldn’t hate.
“Even though your smile is so pretty, what a waste.”
He saw her back to normal, but Moroha wasn’t fully satisfied.
“For the time being, let’s talk to the principal. If you’re going to choose someone, adults are reliable”.
“It’s a good choice.”
“Are you sure you’re not just trying to get out if it?”
Her stinging teasing put Moroha at ease.
He though in his heart that she’d finally returned to how she always was.
He was proud of taking her back.
“I’m sure I’m making the same face as Satsuki now.”
Even with no mirror, he could check.
The sky was still dyed white, and snow kept fluttering down.
He thought the sun ought to have set by now, but he couldn’t tell at all. Was this a white night? It was a strange feeling it still being light when it should be dark.
But it was beautiful.
The sky, and the path of virgin snow stretching out ahead.
Moroha and the others made new footsteps on the road, like it was a brand new canvas, as they peacefully headed home.

Epilogue

The principal told them they should hide until things calmed down.
They shouldn't go back to the dorms, and they should stay off school.
Moroha and the others gratefully accepted that proposal, and the offer to stay at the principal's apartment.
"It's a sleep over with everyone."
Maya innocently rejoiced that night.
She seemed even happier than when she started sharing a room with Moroha.
He felt like he understood, having friends at your house made the mood oddly merry.
Satsuki, Shizuno and Maya all stayed in one room and stayed up late chatting.
Moroha borrowed a sofa in the living room and slept with their chatter as a lullaby.
And then today, they saw the principal off and stayed off from school.
Negotiation with the chairman, negotiation with Edward, negotiation with the Japanese branch, these encircled them and the principal promised she would put all her effort in to resolve them, so they trusted and waited for her.
Satsuki's humming carried to the living room.
"Sorry, stop would you? I don't want to hear people's humming for a while."
Moroha asked with a grimace.
"Eh, why?"
"It makes me remember Edward cutting at me with a smile. It's kind of a traumatic experience."
Even with that appeal, Satsuki hadn't seen the fight with the White Knight, so probably didn't really get it.
"Well, it's fine right?"
Without taking it seriously, she didn't stop.
She was lay down on the sofa, waving her legs around.
In great joy.
"Hey, hey, you've stopped, Moroha?"
"As you command, my princess."
Naturally, that was because she was receiving a certain 'service' for protecting Shizuno.
Moroha's finger traced slowly along her bare arms, her naked skin.
"Ngh... ♥"
At once, Satsuki let out a sweet sigh as her body shook slightly.
It was just telling him not to stop, so Moroha didn't mind it and kept his finger moving.
"Does it tickle?"
"Mm, a bit, but keep going ♥"

Satsuki spoke through her nose as her body slowly relaxed.
Moroha's finger had her at his mercy, crawling over her arms, her legs, her back and all over her body. Her unladylike underwear-clad figure was hidden under the sheets.
Moroha put his finger through the gaps in the cloth and traced directly on Satsuki's bare skin.
"Your finger… feels good… ♥"
"Don't cause misunderstandings, and don't moan when you say it."
Moroha was dejected, not stopping his finger.
It really was something that would shock someone who didn't know, but it was a legitimate medical treatment.
To heal the harsh wounds from AJ.
It was a Dark Art called Healing the Scars, ancient magic characters were traced directly onto the skin and healed the wounds around them. It wasn't as convenient as recovery magic in games, and the target had to rest, and depending on the severity of the wounds, it could take quite a long time to heal.
When he carried Satsuki into the apartment yesterday was the first time, and this was the second treatment.
The first time she'd complained about it tickling, but it seemed she was used to it today.
"If you tease me too much, I'll just stop."
"You wouldn't do that, you meanie! If you leave scars on your cute little sister's beautiful skin, you'll be the one that regrets it!"
"What kind of logic gets me stuck with the regret…"
"Y-you think of that yourself, idiot!"
Satsuki suddenly went bright red and buried her face in the cushion.
She was red to her ears, so he could tell she was probably having some weird delusion again.
He didn't think she could be helped, but he really didn't want to have her become damaged goods, so Moroha carefully continued the treatment.
"That reminds me, are your ribs fine now, Moroha?"
Maya looked over her shoulder from where she was watching television and eating rice crackers.
"Yeah, thanks to your effort in treating them."
Yesterday, Moroha had had Healing the Scars used on him by Maya.
"I'm glad. I'll always heal you if you're hurt."
"I'd rather avoid getting hurt, but I'll count on you if I do."
"You seem awfully happy, you lolicon, Nii-sama."
"…What an about face, didn't you have to stay up all night talking?"
"Ah ha ha ha, d-don't tickle me! Not my sides!"
Moroha directly attacked her bare sides, taking as much revenge as he wanted.
"You both get on really well."

Maya smiled at the sibling’s playfulness, though her smile seemed a little jealous.
“That reminds me, Shizuno-oneesan is back late.”
She suddenly noticed, looking at the clock.
Everyone was talking about getting lunch an hour ago.
The three of them suddenly intruding on the Shimon household had depleted the fridge.
Satsuki needed to be treated, and Shizuno was thankful too, so she had gone shopping but still not returned.
“She’s a rich girl, so she’s useless with keeping a house. So maybe she can’t do shopping properly? Heeheehee.”
Satsuki chuckled meanly. It was possible.
“Maybe she’s caught in the snow.”
Maya looked worriedly out of the window.
That… was possible… unfortunately.
In the middle of this unusually dry rainy season, under the seething sun, with yesterday being boiling.
The whole city was blanketed in snow thanks to the ‘sudden’ abnormal weather around yesterday evening.
The news was reporting on it that morning, all over the country too!
“Hey… wasn’t your barrier meant to prevent damage to the surroundings?”
The origin of that abnormal weather, in human form scratched his head and asked Maya.
“Yes. All of that mountain was protected by my barrier. But outside of it wasn’t under my care.”
In other words, the forbidden spell he used was too large scale, and Maya’s support couldn’t contain it…
Moroha’s estimate was the mana that he’d scattered in the sky was fading, so the day after the day after tomorrow, the weather should return to the oppressive heat.
“Shizuno-oneesan told me yesterday, that long ago, you used it to turn fertile land into barren wastes, over and over. Defending against that is an achievement.”
“Ah, I heard that too, when was ‘long ago’, Nii-sama?”
“I don’t know! I can’t know! And I don’t want to know!”
Moroha angrily denied it.
In the corner of his head, an unusual type of dream passed his mind, but he ignored it.
“Never, I’ll never use a forbidden spell. Yeah, definitely.”
He quietly vowed in his heart.
“A-anyway, I’m worried about Shizuno so I’m going to go take a look.”
If it was because of the snow, it was because of Moroha, so he hurriedly stood up.
“Eh, what about my treatment?”
“Maya, switch out. Do the front please.”

“Leave it to me.”
“Tch. I’ll forgive you, so bring me something hot and sweet back to drink. A-and because it hurts to move, g-give it to me mouth to mouth.”
Satsuki kept asking to be spoiled, but Moroha had already left.
Moroha used the lift to go down from the fourth floor where the apartment was, and found Shizuno in the entrance.
“What, so she is back?”
He thought, but there was something strange.
Her expression was stiff, and she was staring at something. She had dropped the shopping bag, and the contents spilled across the road.
A sense of foreboding flashed through Moroha’s head like lightning.
Then everything moved like clockwork.
He ran to Shizuno, covering her behind him.
“Hey, sleep well last night?”
Because facing her, was Edward.
The sense of foreboding was spot on.
“Did you come for a rematch?”
His ID Tag was still powdered, and he remembered he hadn’t got a new one yet. He had no weapon.
It was an awful situation, how would he fight barehanded against this monster?
With a sharp look, Moroha was running situations through his mind.
“Wait, wait, don’t glare at me with those scary eyes. I just happened to run into Shizuno. I didn’t come for a review either, and of course, the studying abroad can be cancelled.”
With an easy going temperament, Edward raised both his hands.
But Moroha wouldn’t relax as he watched him.
“We fought and I lost. I’m not so stubborn as to come for a rematch right away. I swear on the Queen’s name.”
“*You* lost?”
Moroha was taken aback. It’s not like he defeated Edward, and looking objectively, it could have just happened over and over.
“You successfully took Shizuno and accomplished your goal. I accept that as a knight, that was your win.”
However Edward explained, and unusually bowed.
Moroha finally relaxed.
It may have seemed anticlimactic, but he was actually glad.
“Then, what did you come for.”
“Mari told me you were here after our meeting. I had something I wanted to ask, and something I wanted to tell you.”
“Hmph… what did you want to ask?”
“When we first met, I suddenly attacked you.”
It was about that chaos in the restaurant.
“Why didn’t you dodge it? There’s no way you couldn’t have with your strength.”

“I answered that if you wanted to kill me, I definitely would have died, didn’t I?”
Moroha answered evasively.
In contrast, Edward snapped his fingers with a smile.
“I see! You knew I didn’t want to kill you, so you didn’t dodge.”
Moroha didn’t answer, just titled his head.
“How did you know that? Is there that kind of Dark Art?”
“If you look at your opponent’s prana, you can tell if they’re serious or just fooling around, right?”
“No no, you really can’t!”
Edward stared in amazement and clapped his hands together.
“You really are like a Jack in the Box! Not much can surprise me either!”
Edward clapped his hands in joy.
“White people really are grandiose…”
Moroha complained mentally.
“Once again you move me, Jack.”
“Are you going to make that my nickname!?”
Moroha objected with all his strength.
He could feel a smile from Shizuno behind him.
“No… whatever. So what did you want to tell me? Hurry up and leave.”
Moroha irritably pushed him.
Edward spread his hands widely and spoke loudly.
“Moroha Haimura. With the rights afforded to me as the leader of the British Headquarters, I officially recognise you as an S rank.”
“Sorry, don’t want it.”
“Tough. I’ve already told each branch.”
Even though the White Knight Order had a hive-like decision making process, this man was frankly declaring it.
“Why would you go so far? Actually, does it help you?”
Moroha could only grimace.
“It does. To the Japanese branch, the birth of a Yamato Danshi S rank like you also gives merit to me.”
“Concretely?”
“I can’t say now, you’ll understand soon.”
Edward put a single finger to his mouth and winked.
Moroha sighed deeply and gave up on pursuing it.
He didn’t think he’d give it up easily, and he wanted to him to leave already.
“See you, Jack, I’ll phone soon.”
Edward seemed to see how he felt, and gallantly turned away.
“Sorry, don’t want that either.”
Moroha half-heartedly waved at his large back.
Just like the passing of a typhoon, the British walking disaster finally left.
“Oh yeah, Shizuno. A message from Tadanori, he said he’s not angry so he wants you to phone.”
He left behind those final words.

He exchanged glances with Shizuno, who hadn't interfered.
"What will you do?"
"I'll have to phone him, though I don't really want to."
"If he's ridiculous again, refuse right away, won't you?"
"You're overprotective, though it makes me happy."
Shizuno took out her phone and Moroha watched her as he picked up the bag and its contents.
The siblings talked for a while.
Moroha couldn't hear his voice, but he felt he was ranting somehow.
They finally finished, and Shizuno hung up.
"What did he want then?"
"It was all solved at this morning's meeting, so he won't hold any ill will and wants me to return."
"How dependable of him."
"Indeed. But he was also frantic about how 'things to come are important'."
"Things to come?"
"Making me your bride."
"Eh, pardon."
Moroha reflexively asked her to repeat it.
For some reason, in English.
"In history, only seven people have become S ranked, so in the near future, it's certain you'll be a leader in the White Knight Order. So staking a claim first and marrying into the family is more important than being in the management in England, he said to use any methods I could to seduce you."
"No, I didn't want the details…"
He just wanted to retort that he couldn't believe it.
"So, though I may be incompetent, please take care of me."
"…"
Moroha was silent and dimples formed next to Shizuno's mouth.
He scratched his head harder than he had before.
"Man, your brother sure swings from extreme to extreme."
"It's not just my brother, from now on, lots of people will get close to you to use you. You can't even let your guard down around Sir Edward. I'll warn you, will you be careful too?"
"So annoying…"
Moroha looked up at the heavens and complained.
"But well, if it means I don't have to separate from Shizuno, I guess it's cheap."
He quickly reconsidered and smiled without worry.
For some reason, Shizuno stared right at that smile.
"Yes, now all the problems are solved. Good work."
She placed her hand on her chest and spoke earnestly.
"I can go home proudly, and not be separated from you, in fact… well anyway, I'm happy, and it's all thanks to you, you know?"
She placed her hand on Moroha's chest this time.

It was a chilled, cold hand.
But it heated Moroha's body at its touch.
"There's still one more thing to solve."
Moroha placed his own hand over hers.
Showing he wouldn't let her run away any more.
"It's vague, but you really are the Witch of the Underworld, aren't you?"
He wanted a clear answer.
Shizuno's face stayed mask-like.
He couldn't tell what she was thinking at all.
Don't evade it. Don't take your hand away.
Moroha was filled with those thoughts as he stared at her.
Finally, Shizuno spoke.
"Well, who knows?"
Still with her mask-like expression, she tilted her head.
"After saying that much, don't play dumb."
This warded off Moroha's smile and he pressed further.
"I'm not playing dumb."
"Then, why-"
"I don't want to name myself like Ranjou-san."
Even if she didn't have to worry about her family and could name herself now.
It was nothing other than her own desire not to, that's what she was saying.
"So, remember me properly."
Moroha noticed.
This wasn't her mask-like expression.
This was her serious face.
An expression for telling the most important, serious things.
So Moroha seriously took her words.
Shizuno finished with her serious face.
"That's your atonement to me for chaining my heart, in this life, and the last."